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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the six issues of volume 19 of "First Teacher," a periodical providing helpful activity ideas and information on child development for early childhood teachers and caregivers. The major topics for each themed issue are as follows: (1) Exploring Letters and Numbers, including flannel board activities, and number rhymes and chants (Jan-Feb); (2) Games for Growing, including circle games, music and movement games, and homemade games/puzzles (Mar-Apr); (3) Changes, including comparing children and butterflies, and observing changes under the soil (May-Jun); (4) Beat the Heat, including outdoor activities, experimenting with the heat of the sun, and water play (Jul-Aug); (5) Learning Centers, including science centers, and a drama corner (Sep-Oct); and (6) Holiday Magic, including enjoying the magic of giving, de-stressing the holidays, and holidays in different cultures (Nov-Dec). Features appearing regularly include "Helpful Hints," "Toddler Time," "In the Book Corner," and reproducible pages of activities for parents. (KB)

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Lisa Lyons Durkin, Editor

L. Durkin

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FIRST TEACHER

Vol. 19 No. 1 *For People Who Care for Young Children* January/February 1998

THEME:

Exploring Letters and Numbers

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Sorting Games
- Number Rhymes and Chants
- Ideas for the Flannelboard
- Musical ABC's
- Creative Movement through the Alphabet
- Developmental Writing
- Marvelous Munchible Letters
- Rhythm for Toddlers
- And Lots More!

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

by Lisa Durkin

Here at *First Teacher*, we do not believe that children should have to learn the alphabet and number skills in the preschool years. But letters and numbers are everywhere and most young children will have many experiences with them before they reach kindergarten. It is our belief that these interactions should be positive (NO FAILURE ALLOWED) and fun. Your children learn through all of their senses and through hands-on experiences. So this issue, "Exploring Letters and Numbers" is filled with activities that span the entire curriculum and appeal to each of the senses.

Toddlers begin to learn mathematical concepts through clapping, singing, and moving in rhythm. In Toddler Time, Jeannine Perez shows you how to help the youngest learners develop listening skills and even create a rhythm band.

Rhythm and rhyme are a theme in several articles: from flannelboard learning that starts with an adorable rhyme about kittens to an overview of number chants by Susan Miller, each with follow-up activities. Susan Root shares twenty-six music and movement activities—one for each letter of the alphabet.

It is important for children to see and interact with letters and numbers in their daily lives as much as possible. So Gail Jones shows you how to create learning centers with winter themes that highlight these symbols. In "Serve Yourself a Snack," you'll find out how to structure snacktime so that children follow easy directions on signs. And the entire centerfold is devoted to everyday bulletin boards, games, and art projects that involve letters and numbers.

To round out our sensory menu of activities, Tania Cowling shows you how to make tactile letters and Kathy Faggella introduces Marvelous Munchible Letters. We urge you to use these techniques for making numbers as well.

There is a very interesting and comprehensive article on how children develop the skill of writing by Susan Entz. The author describes the developmental stages young children pass through from infancy through the primary grade years to become "writers." Then she gives you practical ideas for encouraging each phase.

No resource on introducing numbers and letters would be complete without a survey of exc ellent alphabet and counting books. And so this issue ends In the Book Corner. We hope to be a valuable resource for you throughout 1998! Happy New Year.

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UPCOMING THEMES FOR 1998:

MARCH/APRIL:
Games for Growing

MAY/JUNE:
Changes

JULY/AUGUST:
Beat the Heat

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER:
Learning Centers

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER:
Holiday Magic

LOOKING AHEAD TO 1999:

JANUARY/FEBRUARY:
Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

MARCH/APRIL:
Terrific Tools

MAY/JUNE:
Alive and Growing

JULY/AUGUST:
Outdoor Arts

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER:
New Places and Faces

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER:
Once Upon a Time...

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HELPFUL HINTS

9 NEW IDEAS FOR THE NEW YEAR

by Gail P. Jones

As you plan your number and letter activities, listen to interests of children's and incorporate them into special days of the months such as: New Year, Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, Groundhog Day, and Valentine's day. Some lesser known days in January are: Hat Day, National Popcorn Day, and Pizza Week. In February, there's National Music Month, Black History Month, and National Pencil Week.

Try to create activities for all types of learning styles: visual, auditory, tactile, etc. Think of things that can be done inside, outside, and in places other than your classroom.

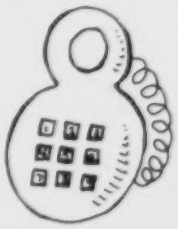
Let children feel important as they pretend to be a teacher. Let them use a pointer to identify letters and numbers on charts and signs throughout the room. Have them take turns by calling letters of first names to go from one activity to another.

Use a thirty drawer hardware box labeled with the letters of the alphabet. It can be used for matching lower case letters or for matching objects with beginning sounds of each letter. Count beans into numbered drawers for a math activity.

Keep a "story can" with small objects for creating stories. Write the beginning sound letter on the blackboard as each object is retrieved. When done, put the objects back in the can again identifying the letters.

Cover square tissue boxes with plain paper. Put letters or numbers on each side for dice games. Use the number dice for addition and subtraction as well as finding out what number comes next.

Use number and letter activities throughout the day—in transitions (*"If your name begins with 'B'..."*), for serving snacks (how many fish crackers each child gets), for giving directions (*"Go to the first table."*) and in songs and movement activities (*"If you're happy and you know it, jump three times..."*)



Include a manual typewriter in your classroom for older (four and up) children to use as well as calculators, adding machines, and computer keyboards. Use toy "tools" and cash registers for younger children. They love using "big people" equipment!

If you want to be ready for March at the end of February, glue red construction paper to green and cut out hearts for centers, etc. Introduce March by turning the red hearts over in groups of three. They make shamrocks!

TODDLER TIME

THEY'VE GOT RHYTHM!

by Jeannine Perez

"One, two, buckle my shoe,
Three, four, open the door."

Nursery rhymes are perennial favorites. Toddlers enjoy singing, counting, and clapping out rhymes, just as they have for hundreds of years. Counting and rhyming coincides with the natural sense of music and rhythm of the world that surrounds each child from birth.

By clapping, singing, and counting in rhythm, we try to relate listening skills and memory to visual props and concrete touchable items. In this way, small children naturally acquire the concept of counting real things, and do not just count by rote. Babies and toddlers seem naturally intrigued by basic mathematical concepts.

Toddlers have the ability to match the quantity they see with the quantity they hear, and that is an understanding of one-to one-correspondence. The concept of one-to-one correspondence is an abstract concept, but even very young children understand and use it naturally, especially when you model it often in song and rhythm.

Music can fit into any schedule. Clap out simple chants during spare moments, *"A block for you and a block for me,"* when putting toys away or *"Put two shoes on two feet."*

Sing often!

One, two, three.
Look at me.
Three, two, one,
I'm having fun.
J.P.

Sing a Valentine song

Please play a little game with me.
First clap your hands, one two, three.
Now hide your hands,
They've gone away.
Find them!
Wave them!
We can play.
J.P.

Make this more fun by holding up fingers (with Valentine stickers on each fingertip or by holding up red construction paper hearts). Simple songs like this are easy to learn, and children soon find they can count both forwards and backwards.

DEVELOP LISTENING SKILLS

Begin by listening to your children playing with instruments. Try to pick up patterns in each child's banging and then echo them yourself. Next beat out your own patterns and ask children to repeat them. Clap out simple patterns that are easy to repeat. Ask a child to clap or pound a rhythm for you to repeat. Be prepared! It will probably be a difficult one.

Vary this game by pounding the floor, snapping fingers, slapping knees, and stepping or stamping.

Almost any song or rhyme can be turned into a counting or rhythm song. Think of stories that contain repetition or counting jingles and encourage your children to listen carefully and then help you tell the stories in rhythm, chanting and clapping. "Three Billy Goats Gruff," "Three Little Pigs," "The Little Red Hen," "The Pancake Boy," and "Goldilocks" all have parts for children.

At circle time, think of as many movements as possible, then play music that has a strong beat and put the movements together into an impromptu dance.

Carry your exploration of rhythm outside when weather permits. Collect old pan lids from parents, the center kitchen and garage sales. Tie them to your playground fence, spacing them far enough apart so that they don't touch. Take turns marching by and hitting them with sticks.

Rhythm helps children see patterns and organization in everyday life. It can also help you in your classroom. One drumbeat means *Begin*. Two

TODDLER RHYTHM BAND

SHAKERS can be made in many ways. You can decorate the bottoms of two small paper plates (for each shaker) with markers or stickers. Put a few dried beans or pebbles on one plate, then top with the other plate and staple or stitch the edges together (placing the stitches or staples close enough that no small objects can fall out). Be sure to staple the shaker with right sides together and bottoms out.

BELLS can be fastened to strong strings or elastic wrist circlets to add jingles to your band. Be careful that no items are small enough to swallow.

SAND PAPER BLOCKS make satisfying rasping noises. Glue coarse sandpaper to thick scraps of wood.

Beat on *BUCKET DRUMS*. Show children what wonderful and different sounds can be made by hitting pans, buckets, or oatmeal containers with wooden spoons or unsharpened pencils. Compare the sounds of your different drums.

Make a *SHOE BOX STRUMMER*. Cut a hole about 2 1/2 inches across near one end of the lid. Paste or glue on patchwork scraps in many shapes and colors to decorate the outside of the box and the lid. Place the lid on the box and slide rubber bands around the box and lid (they should go across the hole). Use different widths of bands if possible. The skinniest ones will make the highest sounds, and thicker rubber bands produce lower sounds.

beats signal *Stop*, and three beats invites children to *Come to Circle*. It is certainly more effective than a teacher's voice!

MAKE RHYTHM INSTRUMENTS!

It's easy to make your own rhythm instruments. If your children help plan and create noisemakers, your rhythm band will be even more successful. Begin with kitchen objects such as pot bottoms and wooden spoons, and gradually introduce all kinds of instruments.

Help your children make simple instruments. Keep a large box with a lid in the classroom, and fill it with all kinds of instruments. There are suggestions for making simple rhythm instruments in the box on this page.

On a gloomy winter's day, have a parade in your classroom with these instruments!

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FLANNELBOARD + FUN = LEARNING

by Barbara F. Backer

You put the figures on;
And the children smile.
You take the figures off.
And they're learning all the while!
There's nothing like the flannel board
For learning that is fun.
So let's learn how to use one! Hey!

Sung to the tune of the "Hokey Pokey," this song tells all there is to know about young children and flannelboards.

Children love playing with flannelboards, moving items on and off, singing songs, counting the items and talking about what they're doing.

Many of us use flannelboards for language activities, but overlook this useful tool when planning for math. Yet children will automatically count flannelboard figures with only the slightest bit of encouragement. Show them how to count from left to right and from top to bottom, touching each figure as they say its number, and they'll count the items you are already using with stories: the three bears with their bowls, spoons, chairs, and beds; the cookies in Red Riding Hood's basket, and the raisins on the Gingerbread Man.

Many teachers use familiar fingerplays to introduce math skills of counting up, counting down, and ordinal numbers. Most of these rhymes adapt well to flannelboard activities. To find a variety of adaptable rhymes, ask your librarian to direct you to books of finger rhymes in the children's section of the library.

COUNTING UP

Lots of familiar finger rhymes add one character at the end of each verse. When you provide felt figures for these rhymes' characters, children can "count up," adding by one as they recite the rhymes and play with the figures at the flannelboard.

One furry kitten went out to play
In the sunshiny back yard one day.
Playing in the yard was so much fun,
She meowed for another kitten friend to come.

Two furry kittens went out to play
In the sunshiny back yard one day.
Playing in the yard was so much fun,
They meowed for another kitten friend to come.

(Continue adding kitten figures and counting up until you run out of figures.)

COUNTING DOWN

In other familiar rhymes, a character leaves at the end of each verse, and children count down—or subtract by one—as the rhyme continues.

For the familiar rhyme about teddy bears jumping on the bed, cut out simple teddy bear shapes. Add eyes with a fine line, permanent marking pen. Place a rectangle of colorful felt on the board for the bed. If you wish, you can use a hot glue gun to attach contrasting shapes of felt to the rectangle to make it look like a quilt. Have children count the correct number of bears onto the quilt. They will be "counting down" each time a bear falls off the bed. Reinforce by counting bears between each verse.

Similar rhymes abound about ghosts, pumpkins, snowmen, hearts, and fish, and all of these are easy to illustrate.

COUNTING AND COMPARING NUMBERS

Songs are another source of flannelboard ideas. Sing about Old MacDonald. Cut out outline felt shapes of animals on his farm and put them on the board as you sing about each animal. Count all of the animals at the end of each verse, noticing that there are more animals than the last time you counted. Have

more than one of some animals — perhaps four cows and three pigs. (You'll have to adjust the song's verses: "Old MacDonald had four cows, E-I-E-I-O...") Have children practice comparison skills by counting just the cows, then just the pigs. Discuss which group has more and/or less.

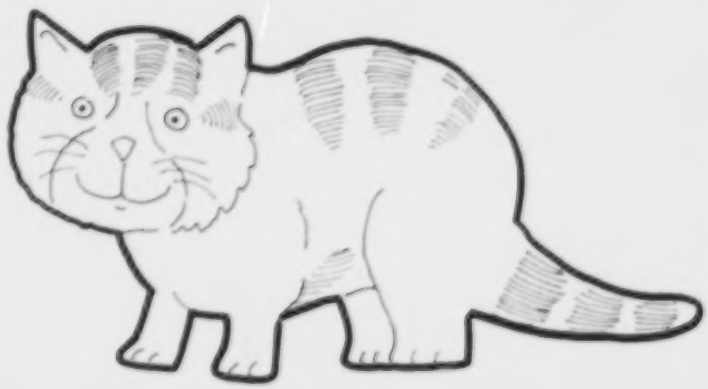
ORDINAL NUMBERS

Many fingerplays like the one below use ordinal numbers— the numbers that tell us the order of things. Cut out simple felt figures to match those in finger rhymes and place them on the flannelboard. Have children point to the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth figures on the board as they say the rhymes.

Five little kittens were playing on the floor.
The first one said, "Let's hide behind the door."
The second kitten said, "Let's play chase in the hall."
The third kitten said, "Let's go play ball."
The fourth kitten said, "Let's scamper down the stairs."
The fifth kitten said, "Let's play beneath the chairs."
Along came puppy dog - bow wow wow.
Five little kittens are hiding right now.

KITTEN PATTERN

Use this pattern (or create your own) to create felt kittens for the flannelboard activities described below.



SERIATION

Use an enlarging/reducing copy machine to make several different-sized duplicates of a pattern. Cut these from felt. Watch your children practice seriation, another math skill, as they arrange the felt pieces in order from largest to smallest or smallest to largest. Encourage them to use words such as *larger, smaller, taller, shorter, narrower* and *wider*.

SHAPES

Cut a variety of shapes in different sizes. Use many different colors of felt. Help children learn the names of circles, squares, triangles, ovals, hexagons, diamonds and trapezoids.

Place the shapes at the flannelboard and make them available during center time so children can explore them. They'll learn how several shapes fit together to make something else. Two matching triangles form a diamond. A triangle and a circle make an ice cream cone.

MATCHING; SORTING;

Cut at least two of each shape, size, and color so children can match items. Encourage them to sort/classify by color, size or shape. As their skill grows, they'll begin to classify by two attributes, putting the large blue shapes together and the small yellow shapes in another place.

CREATE FLANNELBOARD FIGURES

Creating flannelboard figures is easy. Sketch a simple figure on paper, cut that out, then pin it to felt as a pattern. Coloring books are good inspiration for "patterns." Use picture book illustrations to spark your own ideas for flannelboard figures.

As time passes, your children will show you more and more uses for the flannelboard. Follow their lead while they're having fun, and you'll discover together the many ways children can learn math while using a flannelboard.

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SORTING IT ALL OUT

by Sherry Burrell

Children are natural "sorters." The first sorting activities involve simply moving things from one place to another. A baby sitting up in its crib will often move piles of toys and blankets from place to place.

Toddlers begin sorting by trial and error. They are perhaps the first to sort things by attribute. Things the toddler "likes" stay in his crib, and things he "doesn't like" get thrown onto the floor. Or maybe things that make an interesting noise when they fall get thrown out, and others things stay. While young children can't articulate the reason for their choices, they are nevertheless making decisions based on what they have learned from experience, and this is called "sorting."

Sometimes, as adults, when we are faced with a difficult decision that has many parts to consider, we say that we need to "sort things out" in our minds. We mean that we need time to look at all the different ways in which the pieces of information relate to each other, and figure out which things are the most important ones to us, so that we can make a clear decision. In this case, the "sorting" that we do helps us to organize our thoughts. Sorting objects probably helps establish connections in the brain, and "sorting things out" is a way for the brain to use those connections to help it sort abstract ideas.

Teachers who plan the classroom environment so that children have many opportunities to sort things both with and without a prescribed "structure" will help children to set the foundations for future thinking skills, while at the same time, help them to learn specific concepts about number, color, shape, size, etc. One wonderful thing about activities that involve sorting is that children can often select or even create their own "rule" about why they are sorting things in a certain way. Each child may design her own sorting rule, and each child may learn from the others. Using all the different learning centers, teachers can create a wide range of sorting activities with very simple objects.

THINGS TO SORT

Create "tubs" of any of these objects by asking parents to send in whatever they have at home, by collecting things

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yourself, by having children go out and find them, or by scrounging around in your classroom. Be careful to choose only those items that would be appropriate and safe for the age of the children in your class to handle!

ENCOURAGE SORTING

Some collections, such as markers, Bandaids, macaroni products or cereal shapes, might inspire children to sort by simply matching exact colors, types, or designs. Other types of collections, such as socks, spools of thread, business cards, or potholders might encourage children to make up their own "rule" about why they are sorting the things in a certain way. For example, one child might sort a bunch of socks by matching each pair, while another might sort them by putting them all into piles by general color, and still another might sort them by length or design. In order to open up more pathways in the child's brain, it is important to allow and encourage each child to "sort" using whatever characteristics she chooses. But be sure to ask children to explain to one another what rule they used!

It really helps if the space that is provided for sorting has materials that support and encourage "piles." Providing small mats, small bowls, pieces of string that can be made into circles, or a large posterboard divided into sections will help the child to organize the activity. If a child is having difficulty beginning the task, here are some possible comments or questions to use while a child is approaching the activity.

▶ *"Do you see any (buttons) that look alike?"*

▶ *"Look at this one! Do you see any that look like they go with it?"*

▶ *"Tell me about this one."* (The child is helped to describe what she sees.) *"Are there any more that also are (red) (small) (round)?"*

▶ *"Try making a pile right over here. We'll call it a 'family'. Which ones belong to this 'family'? Why?"*

Besides the materials suggested here, every classroom for young children is filled with other materials that are easily used for sorting: beads, puzzle parts, Legos, blocks, books, pictures, dramatic play/housekeeping supplies (plastic foods, dishes, dolls, doll clothes, etc.). Once this sorting is done, children love to count their piles, stack with them, give each one a label, and mix them all up!

Some children love to be challenged by asking them to create a sorting activity for other children to do! For example, a child who knows all the sounds of the letters might cut out pictures from magazines so that there are two pictures for every letter of the alphabet! Pictures could be mounted, and on the back, the correct letter could be written. Some children in the class might sort those pictures using their own "rule," others might turn them over and sort by matching the letters, and still others might try to take the challenge and match the words by beginning sounds! Of course, a teacher might create this activity as well.

"Sort out" all these ideas, and enjoy offering "sorting" materials to your children! Most likely, they will "sort" of love these activities!

NUMBER RHYMES AND CHANTS

by Susan A. Miller

Children become caught up very easily in the rhythm of these time-honored rhymes and chants. An exciting way to explore number concepts and processes while enhancing children's listening and language skills, rhymes are fun to repeat over and over.

Here are some hands-on activities to extend number rhymes and chants throughout the curriculum and classroom. Are you ready? Get set —

One for the money, two for the show;
Three to get ready, and four to go!

COUNTING

One potato, two potato,
Three potato, four,
Five potato, six potato,
Seven potato, more.

Math Have children clench their fists to create "potatoes." Count and chant as they place one on top of the other. For added fun, see how fast they can count, or add and count a friend's fists, too. See how many "more" potatoes they can count.

Snack Bake potatoes to eat and enjoy with cheese, sour cream, or salsa on top. Count out enough for each child to have one.

ADDITION

One elephant went out to play
On a spider's web one day.
He had such enormous fun,
He asked another elephant to come.

Two elephants went out to play, etc.

Movement Sing, count and keep adding one more swaying elephant. Join together by having a "trunk" (arm in front) · grab a "tail" (arm in back). This is a wonderfully silly game.

Art Have children use colorful chalk to draw giant whimsical spider webs outdoors on the sidewalk — then have the elephants go for a web walk!

Storytime Encourage children to create a yarn web on the flannelboard. Have them count and add as many assorted felt elephants as they can before they fall off. Then begin again!

SUBTRACTION

Five little monkeys, jumping on the bed.
One fell off and bumped his head.
Mama called the doctor, and the doctor said,
"No more monkeys jumping on the bed.

Four little monkeys, etc.

Movement/Math While saying the chant, have five, then four, and so on, invite children to pretend to jump up and down then fall off the make-believe bed (blanket on the floor).

Dramatic Play/Health-Safety Provide a pair of phones for Mama to call the doctor. Put out bandages to fix the monkeys' bumped heads. Discuss how "jumping on a bed" can be dangerous.

Art Use clean, old socks, glue and fabric scraps to create interesting monkey sock puppets. Have children slide their creations over their hands and make the chanting monkey puppets bounce with their arm movements.

GROUPING

Rub-a-dub-dub,
Three men in a tub,
And who do you think they be?
The butcher, the baker,
The candlestick-maker;
Turn 'em out, knaves all three.

Math Encourage children to act out the rhyme. See if they can find other sets of three people to put in the "tub" (a laundry basket) —three blonde boys, three children whose

names begin with "B", etc.

Water Play Provide various objects for children to wash in the water tub—baby dolls or housekeeping corner dishes. Add some soap bubbles, too.

Social Studies Locate and discuss pictures of various occupations in magazines. Cut them out and create a huge mural.

ONE-TO-ONE CORRESPONDENCE

Baa, baa, black sheep
Have your any wool?
Yes, sir. Yes sir,
Three bags full.
One for the master,
And one for the dame,
And one for the little girl
Who lives down the lane.

Math Stuff three small bags with cotton balls made to look like wool. Dramatize the rhyme having each character select a bag. Continue this one-to-one correspondence at snack. Name each child, then have him take one napkin, one cup, and so on.

Gross Motor Play Crumple up lots of sheets of newspaper and throw them into a large cardboard box until the children are sure it's "full." Then, have fun jumping into the soft pile. Does the box still look full? Why?

Science/Math Fill up pairs of paper bags with materials (leaves, twigs, pebbles, crayons, etc.) Guess which is heavier? Lighter? Use a pan balance scale to see if the guesses are correct.

PAIRS

Diddle, diddle, dumpling,
My son John,
Went to bed with his trousers on;
One shoe off, and one shoe on,
Diddle, diddle, dumpling,
My son John.

Math Have children pretend they are John. At circle time, let them put one of their shoes in the center. How quickly can they identify their shoes in the pile and match them to the ones on their feet?

Language Find pictures of pairs of objects (mittens, socks, etc.) in magazines and catalogs. Have children glue them in a scrapbook about pairs to share in the library.

Dramatic Play Provide a vast array of footwear (cowboy boots, ballerina slippers, etc.) to try on to stimulate children's imaginations.

MONEY

Hot cross buns!
Hot cross buns!
One a penny, two a penny.
Hot cross buns.

Math/Dramatic Play Set up a bakery. Encourage children to chant these words to attract their customers. Use play money to buy and sell their baked goods.

Art Make play dough to create variously shaped baked goods.

TIME

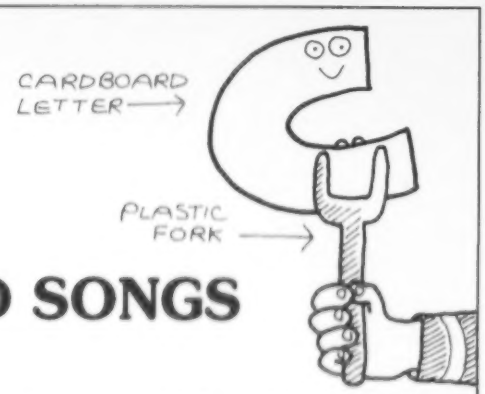
Wee Willie Winkie runs through the town,
Upstairs and downstairs in his night-gown,
Rapping at the window, crying through the lock.
Are the children in their beds?
For it's past eight o'clock.

Math Make a bar graph of the children's bedtimes. What is the most common time?

Gross Motor Play Indoors, or out, design an obstacle course so that children can "run through the town." What other ways can they move besides running?

Language/Circle time Next to children's names, write what they tell you they wear for bedtime. Encourage them to illustrate their dictations.

Once you introduce these rhymes and charts, be sure to build on children's own ideas.



SWINGING STORIES AND SONGS

by Margery Kranyik

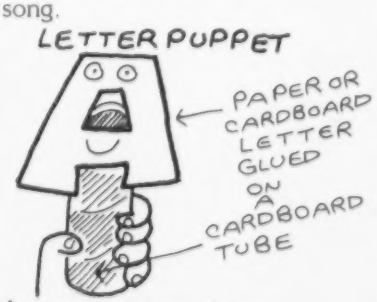
"ABC, 1-2-3,
Everybody look at me."

Long before children know the meaning of A-B-C and 1-2-3, they know the vocabulary. Is it developmentally appropriate for children to know the alphabet and be able to count at preschool age? It is—as long as their learning has been a result of their own interest and has been made enjoyable by the teacher. You can set the stage for later experiences with math and reading.

Learning through music and movement is always fun because it can be applied to all areas of the curriculum—including alphabet and numbers. Here are some ideas where children move and sing with numbers and letters.

☆ Visit a local shop that specializes in outdoor recreation (such as *Eastern Mountain Sports*). Purchase several lengths of neon-colored rope. Cut the rope into three-foot lengths. Give each child in your group a rope and ask children to make their favorite design on the floor. Repeat with another design choice. Then ask them to make the first letter of their first name. Perfect replication is not important. Repeat using as many letters as you think children might know. Next, ask them to make their favorite number followed by any other numbers they might know. Repeat the activity as children gain more knowledge of letter and number names.

☆ Read and sing the song story, *A" You-re Adorable* illustrated by Martha Alexander (Candlewick). This old song, originally an adult love song, is transformed through illustrations into a delightful narration of the affection of an adult for a child. The music is included to help those too young to remember the tune! As children begin to recognize the alphabet, create letter puppets that they can hold as they sing the letters in this song.



☆ Select a series of letters—perhaps those that are first letters of children's first names. Write them on a piece of construction paper. Gather children together and give them directions such as: *"Jump to the letter A;" "Slide to B;" "Tip-toe to J."* Try this activity with numbers, too.

☆ Sing "This Old Man" by Pam Adams (Child's Play). Children can hold up number cards or fingers as you sing the numbers in the song. Ask them to make up their own rhymes for the numbers one through ten.

☆ Children and parents alike enjoy the traditional "Alphabet Song." After they learn it, have children tap rhythm sticks to the letter names as they sing.

☆ Teach or review "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe." Children can use their number cards or puppets each time they recite a number. The rhyme lends itself to creative dramatics as children can create their own interpretative movements for the words.

☆ Don't forget "One Little, Two Little _____." You can reinforce knowledge of the numbers one through ten by making up your own words to the tune according to your theme of study. For example: *Ten Little Pumpkins, Ten Little Fir Trees, Ten Little Sunflowers*. Ask children to help compose the song.

Remember to let children's interest and enthusiasm be your guide. If they are curious about letters and numbers, respond in ways they can identify with—through song, story, and motion.

MUSICAL ABCS

by Karin-Leigh Spicer

Music is one of the special joys of childhood. Combine it with learning the alphabet and children can have fun while improving their letter/sound recognition.

♪ Start simple. Sing the "Alphabet Song." It's actually sung to "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." In singing it, have young learners try not to make one word out of the letters "L-M-O-P." Try singing the alphabet to other songs, "Old MacDonald," "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" or have children select an old favorite. Have children create their own alphabet songs or chants. They can use keyboards, drum sticks, or tambourines. This lets them practice singing the alphabet in different formats. Many children can sing the classic alphabet song, but can't repeat the alphabet alone.

♪ Children can sing along via sound cassette with Ray Charles to *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault (Simon & Schuster). This rhyme\chant tells the story of the entire alphabet trying to climb a coconut tree.

♪ Draw letters (Permanent magic markers work well.) on a large ball. Young learners toss the ball back and forth as music plays. When the music stops, the child holding the ball must say the letter in front of him and a word the letter begins with. Simple pictures (sun, house, tree, flower, apple) can also be drawn on a ball. When the music stops, the child must name the picture and the letter it begins with.

♪ Play musical chairs. When the music stops, the child without a chair must draw a letter from a bag. If he can identify the letter and give a word the letter begins with, he can stay in the game. If not, he must sit down and another chair is taken away.

♪ Paint or draw large colorful letters in a circle on the floor. As music is played, children walk around the circle. When the music stops, children must name the letter they are standing on and give a word the letter begins with to stay in the game.

♪ Help children create their own letter band. Give each child a cardboard cutout letter or let them make and decorate their own letter and decide what type of instrument it will be. The letter can be played anyway a child wants, an "I" can be a flute, a "P" bagpipes or guitar, "B" bongo drums, or "J" saxophone, as long as the letter sounds correctly. Let children take turns, conducting the band. Teach them simple hand movements for slow, fast, soft, and loud. The music from the band is nonsensical and noisy, but funny, and children can practice their vowel and consonant sounds.

♪ Give each child a kazoo and a letter. Form an alphabet kazoo band. This activity is also nonsensical and noisy but it gives young learners practice with their vowel and consonant sounds and most find it lots of fun.

MOVING THROUGH THE ALPHABET

by Susan M. Root

Music and movement activities are a perfect way to introduce or reinforce letters of the alphabet. Consider using different body parts, body actions, songs, games, instruments, and composers as you move through the alphabet. You can add to this list as you think about your favorite movement activities.

nimal walks need instrumental music or use Greg and Steve's "Animal Action" (Youngblood Records).

ouncing balls give children lots of opportunities with many sizes of balls.

lap 2-3-4-5-6-7-8. Try chanting numbers while waiting in line; change the action by letting children choose a new idea.

ance to soft music. Try up and down movements as you move.

lephant Walk: *"Can you make your feet big and slow and heavy while you swing your trunk?"*

ly, flutter, and float. Give children feathers to hold and wave or toss and watch how they flutter to the ground. Encourage them to imitate a feather!

lide and gallop. Glide side to side with one foot leading and the other moving to meet it and switch to gallop (forward motion with one foot always leading).

opscotch: use chalk to mark an area outdoors or masking tape indoors and let children be challenged as they hop along on one foot and then on two.

ce Fun in Winter: try "ice skating" by placing paper plates under feet and sliding across the carpet. Then play, "Pass the Ice Cube" for a cold weather circle game.

umping over blocks, into hoops, from carpet mat to carpet mat, and so on, provides a great indoor obstacle course.

ookaburra: what is it? Try to find a picture of this bird and share this favorite song.

eap Frog is a great indoor or outdoor game that many have forgotten from the past.

arch with maracas. Make a homemade maracas and march to some Mozart music!

utcracker Time: Tchaikovsky's music lends itself to an assortment of movements. Ribbons or streamers enhance children's movements as they explore the music.

ver/under, Out and in: it's time to explore *opposites*. Hap Palmer's "Circle Game" (Baldwin. New York Educational Activities) contains many opposites.

athways can be explored as children move from one area to another. Can you move in a straight, zigzag, or curved path?

uietly, quickly, with a quiver— *"How many ways can you move?"* Begin a chart listing all the ways children think of to move.

ow, Row, Row Your Boat by having young children sit side by side with arms on each other's shoulders and rock side to side. Older children can face each other, linking hands, touching feet, and rocking back and forth.

carves are a great prop to use with classical music. Guide children by suggesting places for the scarves—in front, to the side, above, below, between.

ambourines can be used to set the tempo for movement around the room. Tap the instrument lightly and quickly for small, fast steps and pat it slowly and loudly for large, slow steps. See how quickly children can change their movements.

nder the Umbrella: have children walk a masking tape "tightrope" as they use a small umbrella for balance like the high wire artists in the circus.

ary your instructions. Speak very quietly or very slowly. Ask children to take small steps, very small steps, very small steps. Try the opposite: giant steps, very giant steps.

heels on the Bus is always a favorite. What other vehicles have wheels? Try the wheels on the car or truck or tractor for interesting variations.

marks the spot. Place a number of masking tape X's on the floor. Children can have a treasure hunt—looking for a spot, grabbing a shovel, digging, lifting out the buried treasure and opening it.

ard of Yellow Yarn: have children make shapes on the floor with their yarn. Ask questions such as: "Can you step inside your shape?" "Walk on your shape?" "Make your shape disappear?"

oo animals. Take an imaginary trip to the zoo. Sing "Going to the Zoo" on the way then go through the gate and walk to the first exhibit. Can you imitate each animal that you see?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SERVE YOURSELF A SNACK

by Leanne D. Grace

"Serve yourself snack" is one of the best ways to explore the importance of letters and numbers. After all, food is a natural reinforcer. In our classroom, we set up an independent snack table because we wanted to extend "free play" or choice time. We had observed some things that disturbed us during whole group snack: sometimes children rushed to finish snack as if they were in a contest; some children didn't want snack and so we threw away food after they played with it; a great deal of time was spent waiting for everyone to finish before beginning our next activity.

We realized that providing young children with choices and opportunities to be independent could be achieved with snack time. The challenge was rehearsing and reviewing expected behaviors with children. When beginning, an adult should be nearby to observe and help children practice pouring and counting, looking for those children who can "help" others and model how to quietly remind friends of quantities by pointing out the snack sign.

Snack signs tell how many or how much of the snack children may serve themselves. In the beginning, make the signs utilizing parts of packaging from the product. Thus children begin to recognize print in context. Children are also consulted about how much would be an appropriate serving. (Responses often depend upon the choice: *"20 chocolate cookies! Do you think there would be enough for everyone?"*) Problem solving occurs as a decision is made how to measure the snack. Liquids, such as water and juice, are poured. Dry cereals, popcorn, and fish crackers utilize measuring cups. In a very short time, children become the sign makers.

We observed new behaviors during serve yourself snack time: much conversation between the children included reminders to each other about how much and how many. A lot of counting utilized one-to-one correspondence, number recognition, comparing and contrasting amounts taken and eaten (*"I have three crackers; you have two." "I ate two; now there is one left."*), and utilizing units of measurement (1/2 full, 1 cup). There was significantly less waste as children chose not to snack or just drink, again reaffirming the power of choice and independence. Self-serve snack had also created interesting social situations where children were sharing snack time with "friends" they may not have necessarily chosen to sit with. They also must ask someone to pass napkins, cups, the pitcher, and so on.

When presenting this idea to other early childhood educators, the concerns expressed included, *"What if a child takes too much?"*

What if! We have watched children monitor each other or come to an adult. Then we model gentle reminders and point to the sign. Children need to know that you trust them to follow the rules and as with anything, they need to practice.

123/ABC

LETTERS AND NUMBERS AROUND THE CLASSROOM

by Jeannine Perez

Letters and numbers are symbols of our world. In your classroom, they can be part of the decor. The letters and numbers in games, books, pillows, mobiles, and bulletin boards can also become part of the social times of the day. You can work them into circle times, play times, music, and art. Children build much of their language and math knowledge in the company of others. Make letters and numbers part of everything they see and do in your classroom.

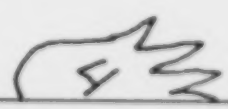
FUN WITH A CALENDAR

Children can learn from calendar activities, even if they can not yet count or recognize numerals to 31. Make calendars a daily circle activity, and introduce each monthly calendar by showing several dates for special times; field trips, holidays, or parties. Make a special calendar for February. Mark all birthdays, Groundhog's Day, and Valentine's day. Don't forget President's Day. Use this time to introduce the math concepts of counting, sequence, comparisons, years, seasons, months, weeks, and days. Ask children to take turns finding days of the week on the calendar. *"Can you count the days until Friday?"* Compare the months. *"What special days are in February that are not in January?"* If you keep records on daily weather, compare seasonal vocabulary also.

EASY HANDS-ON IDEAS

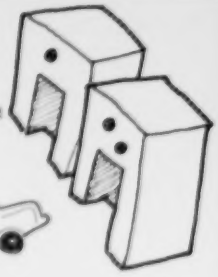
DINOSAUR FOOTPRINTS

Make dinosaur footprints and create a trail around the room. Cut dinosaur prints in many sizes and colors. Put numbers on each set of tracks and then lay down twisty paths of tracks around the room. Some dinosaurs took giant steps. Others left smaller trails. Have children follow each path according to your directions; jumping, crawling, taking giant or baby steps—stepping on the footprints and calling out the numbers. Chairs and tables become trees and volcanoes, and spread newspapers become swamps. Try variations to keep the game challenging. Ask children to put the prints in numerical order, then give instructions. *"Go to a print that is less than 10, and more than 4."* If children are ready for even more difficult games, ask them to go to a print that is two more than 5 or one less than 6.



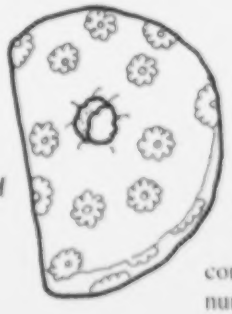
MAKE A MILK JUG HOUSE

Make a milk jug house to store cards and games. To make it, use an empty milk jug and cut an opening in the jug's flat side to make a front door. Add a chimney by wrapping colored paper around the pour spout. Cut out windows and add fabric curtains. Keep small cards with letters and numbers inside. Children can play "Go Fish" or "Memory" with the cards.



MANIPULATIVE GAMES

Children like manipulative games. Cut garages from shoe boxes. Use markers to put numbers on small cars, and number the garages with corresponding dots. (*"Put the number 5 car in its garage."*) Again, this simple game helps children to see one-to-one relationships.



MAKE RAINBOW PLAY DOUGH

Make Rainbow Play Dough for 3-D numbers and letters.

You'll Need:

- 1 1/2 cups water
- liquid food coloring in primary colors
- 2 Tbs. cooking oil
- 2 cups flour
- 1/2 cup salt
- 4 Tbs. Cream of tartar

What to Do:

In a small bowl, combine water, food coloring, and oil. Set aside. Put flour, salt, and cream of tartar into a large saucepan. Pour water mixture into pan, stir constantly and cook for five minutes (until a soft ball of dough forms). Use a single color per batch or divide the clay into many portions. Cool the dough for five minutes, and then knead it with your hands until it is smooth. Store in the refrigerator when not in use.

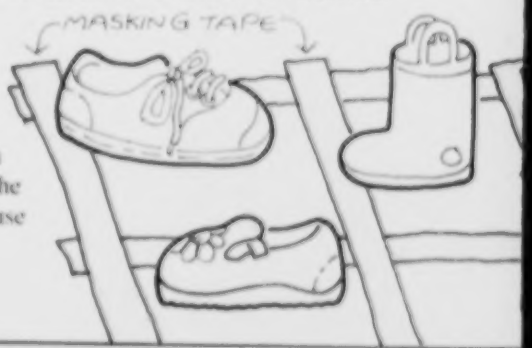
SOFT, COMFORTABLE SEATS

Letters and numbers can make soft, comfortable seats. Cut huge letters and numbers from a variety of colors of felt for colorful pillows that can even be arranged into simple words or names. Cut each letter and number double,using different colors for front and back. Stitch by machine or by hand, leaving a space to insert polyester batting. When it is plump but still soft, stitch the opening closed. Make out letter pillows large enough to be floor pillows, and the number pillows were cut smaller and placed on chairs and naptime cots.

Make other pillows from old T-shirts. (Ask for discards from parents.) Use markers to add letter designs or sew on appliques made from the felt scraps, then sew bottom and sleeves closed. Stuff the pillows through the neck of the T-shirt, and then sew it closed.

GIANT GRID PUZZLE

You can use masking tape and a large empty floor space to make a giant grid puzzle. Make it a funny game. Line up one of each of the children's shoes on squares for an easy matching game. You can use the grid and duplicate cards to match and cover floor square.



ABCD

Scrap Materials

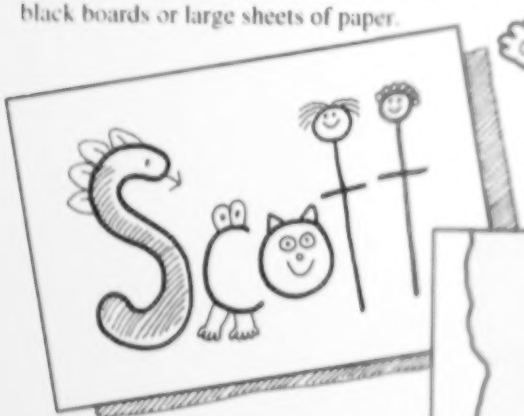
See how many letters and numbers you can make from scrap materials on the art table. Try sandpaper cutouts and letter collages; use pipe cleaners and clay snakes to form letters and numbers; count with buttons, counting bears stencils, and stamps.

Make a Bulletin Board

Make a bulletin board or poster with magazine pictures and then point out sets of objects. *"Bears have four legs." "Cars have four wheels." "This picture of a house shows four windows in front."*

Fanciful Creatures

For older children who know the difference between make believe and real, make the letters of each child's name into fanciful creatures on black boards or large sheets of paper.



Make Finger Paints

You'll Need:

* 1 envelope unflavored gelatin
* 2 1/2 cups cold water
* 1 cup cornstarch
* 1/2 cup soap flakes
* food coloring

What to Do:

In a small bowl, sprinkle the gelatin over 1/2 cup water and mix well. Combine cornstarch, soap flakes, and remaining two cups water, add gelatin mixture, then stir and cook until thick. Strain the mixture into four containers. Cool an hour, then add a different color (liquid or paste coloring) to each container. Store the finger paints in a refrigerator when not in use.

Show children how they can form letters and numbers on cookie sheets or tabletops. For easier cleanup and a good smelling art center, use shaving cream to make letters and numbers.

Make Milk Carton Blocks

Recycle and do your bit for the planet by making blocks from small milk cartons. First cut off tops and slip one upside down inside the other. The bottoms are at opposite ends to make sturdy blocks. Cover the blocks by gluing on colored paper or use plastic adhesive. With a wide black marker or black acrylic paint, put different numbers and letters on each side of the blocks. Play many games with the blocks, using them for names, addresses, phone numbers, and messages. You can also use big cartons brought from home or any boxes that are identical and square.

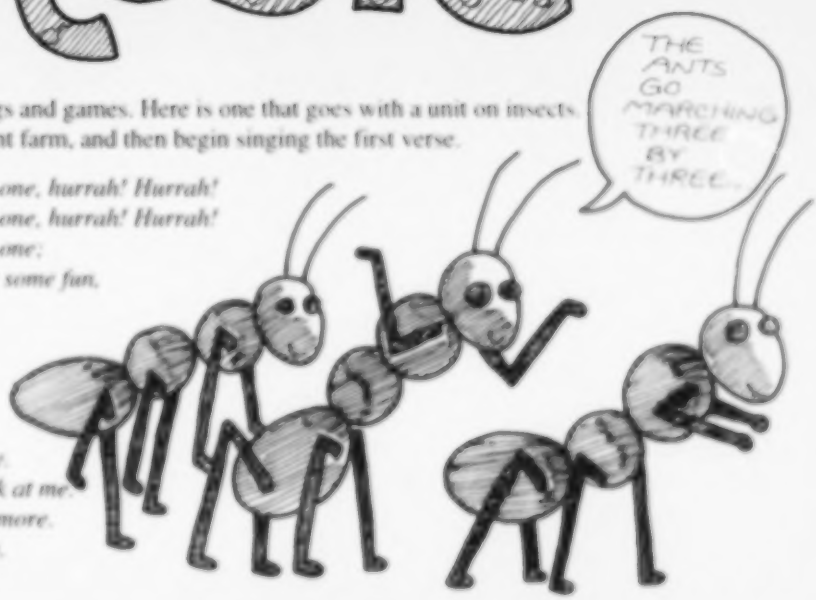
123/ABC

MUSIC

There are many counting songs and games. Here is one that goes with a unit on insects. Sit on the floor, observe an ant farm, and then begin singing the first verse.

The ants go marching one by one, hurrah! Hurrah!
The ants go marching one by one, hurrah! Hurrah!
The ants go marching one by one;
The little one stopped to have some fun,
And they all went marching
Down into the town
Boom, boom, boom...
(unknown)

- *...two by two, without a clue.*
- *...three by three, please look at me.*
- *...four by four to find some more.*
- *...six by six to pick up sticks.*



MORE QUICK IDEAS

- Serve up language at snack time. Give each child a small pile of raisins or bite-sized cereal and ask children to form them into letters or numbers. Name them and eat them.
- Parade giant letters and numbers or primary colors around the room at eye level.
- Hang a clothesline across a corner, then give each child clip clothespins and paper mittens with different designs. Let children match them. Some could have dots on one mitten, and corresponding numbers on the other.
- Label important objects around the room with cards. Signs identify TABLE, CHAIRS, TOYS, BOOKS.
- Write notes to your children.
- Cut out large heart shapes. Write the alphabet in bold letters, then cut into puzzle pieces. Challenge children to put the puzzle together.

READY..... SET..... READINESS!!

by Evelyn J. Woldman

Numbers and letters..... letters and numbers..... these are to be sure the 2 "R"s of the 3 "R"s that those of us in the early childhood field think about in all of our work! Whether we are at day care centers, early childhood centers, preschools, or family child care homes, readiness is one of our major callings. Therefore, finding all of the resources we can to help us with these skills can only be a plus!!

I will devote my column in this issue to listing some of the newest and most effective early childhood pieces which I have seen in the readiness field. Many of the early childhood programs include both reading and math, so rather than separate them I will list them alphabetically with a descriptor for each. Ready.... set....compute!!

- *A to Zap* (Sunburst, Macintosh/Windows CD) Children learn about letters, numbers and words as they explore the 26 letters of the alphabet; there are very interactive and entertaining characters.
- *Bailey's Book House* (Edmark, Macintosh/Windows CD) Bailey and his neighborhood friends teach children a variety of early reading skills, letters, words, rhyming, and storytelling.
- *Chick-Chicka Boom Boom* (Davidson, Macintosh/Windows CD) Music, video, and animation bring this award-winning book to life in an interactive, multimedia adventure.
- *Dr. Seuss' ABC* (Broderbund, Macintosh/Windows CD) More than 400 alphabetically-inspired surprises await children; based on the Dr. Seuss book.
- *Hop to It* (Sunburst, Macintosh) Number line practice with addition, subtraction, and equivalences.
- *JumpStart PreSchool* (Knowledge Adventure, Macintosh/Windows CD) Introduce children to colors, letters, numbers, and shapes.
- *Jump Start Kindergarten* Knowledge Adventure (Macintosh/Windows CD) A variety of readiness activities, encouraging lots of exploration.
- *The New Katie's Farm* (Lawrence Productions, Macintosh/Windows CD) Exploration of farm, animals, also letters and their sounds, help children begin reading.
- *Millie's Math House* (Edmark, Macintosh/Windows CD) Children explore fundamental math concepts, such as counting and classification, in six different exploratory activities.
- *Reader Rabbit Toddler* and *Reader Rabbit PreSchool* Each program contains a full year of counting, colors, shapes, and alphabet.

The programs are loaded with activities to capture the attention of the youngest set.

NOTE TO THE NOVICE:

Make sure when you select software in the readiness area, that it is not simply a program where you "type the letter A," or "Count the chickies on the farm." All software today, no matter what the age of the audience, should have a dimension where children can explore, experiment, and experience their learning in a creative way. Don't compromise!

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

WINTER LEARNING CENTER WITH NUMBERS AND LETTERS

by Gail P. Jones

January and February can be long, cold months here in the Northeast, but they can also be busy and filled with fun if you incorporate the special days of each month in your number and letter centers! Be sure to capitalize on the New Year! *"1-9-9-8! We know it will be great!"* Tap the numbers on a board or jump to them on the floor. Sing a rhyme and in time, your children will beg for more! Use the calendar (and all the old ones!) for drawing shapes or sorting clips in the numbered spaces! Remember to save all those appointment books, too. Children love to use them in the dramatic play area and writing center.

JANUARY

- Brainstorm with children: *"What is January?"* Use their ideas such as *"new year," "snowman," "cold," "ice," "mittens," "Martin Luther King, Jr.,"* etc. for center ideas.
- Create story picture paper books for each month of the year. Add items as they happen in the months to come.
- Make good use of the snowman and all the snowballs, from paper snowball "fights" with letters to identify or secret messages written inside each one to magnetic laminated snowballs programmed with numbers or letters to put in order, match, add, subtract or put together to spell words.
- Use the cold weather to use thermometers in your science center as well as predicting, recording, and graphing temperatures and weather conditions throughout the month.
- Do ice-related experiments.
- Go "ice fishing" in a box with a magnetic fishing pole for fish of different sizes, colors, and shapes, with numbers or letters on them for great activities in categorizing, letter and number recognition, etc.
- In the block center, let children create their own igloo with large foam pieces or empty boxes.
- There are unlimited uses for mittens in centers. Begin with the story, *The Mitten*, for sequencing and acting out. Match mittens in a multitude of ways! Make folder games with different-sized hands to match to the right-sized mitten. Match numbers to dots on mittens or upper and lower case letters. Punch holes in pairs of cardboard mittens; let children match them and sew with yarn.
- Create accordion people in all colors, sizes, and shapes to connect and count to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. And, before you store away all those white doilies, save some for topping with hearts, because here comes February!

FEBRUARY

- February will begin before you know it with Groundhog Day. The "groundhog" (your children in the music and movement center) can hop out of a big box, looking around and jumping back in when he sees his shadow! Add a Groundhog Day song. Matching programmed groundhogs with numbers or letters to match to their holes in the ground will delight the less active members of your class as will cards to sequence that depict his every move!
- Laminate a basket full of hearts for Valentine activities. They can be used for sorting by size, recognizing numbers, doing actions a specific number of times, letter recognition, identifying beginning sounds, etc. (Remember that you can use a permanent marker on a laminated object and erase with nail polish remover or hair spray for reprogramming).
- Your dramatic play area may be a post office with a large box with lettered slits for sorting all the Valentines written and sent within the class. Let the postmaster use stamps and stamp pads for dating them and, of course, have a postage stamp center using all those magazine

stamps you've received all year!

✎ The Queen of Hearts nursery rhyme will open a door to many more activities involving playing cards such as finding the royal family, playing "war," making play dough or real tarts following numbered directions and making patterned crowns for those you love!

✎ Put Valentine cards in your reading center for "reading"! Love will be a much used word during the month of February as children make cards and write messages. Use magnetic letters to copy, glue letters to cover with copy paper and rub over with the broad side of a crayon and large letters to arrange that say "I LOVE YOU"!

✎ Make good use of the candy hearts which have messages for reading, graphing, matching, creating patterns, and eating! (Use a musical Valentine for transitions and cleanup time.)

✎ For President's Day, you can use a variety of activities for learning numbers and letters in your centers from counting pennies, predicting heads (Lincoln's) and tails, to creating patterns with nickels and pennies. Use banks for letter and repeat number activities.

And, for all special days use small stickers to create bingo games. These are always loved!

HEART COOKIES

You'll Need: heart-shaped cookie cutters ♥1/2 cup margarine ♥1/4 cup shortening ♥3/4 cup peanut butter ♥1 cup sugar ♥1 egg ♥1 small jar of raspberry jam ♥1 teaspoon vanilla ♥2 Tablespoons milk ♥3 cups flour ♥rolling pin ♥cookie sheet ♥mixer ♥cooling rack ♥plastic knife

What to Do:

1. Beat margarine, shortening, and peanut butter well. Add egg and beat well.
2. Add sugar, vanilla, flour and milk.
3. Chill 2 hours or more.
4. Roll dough on lightly floured board to 1/4 inch thick.
5. Cut out heart shapes with cookie cutters.
6. Place on a lightly greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350°F for 8-10 minutes (until slightly browned)
7. Remove to cooling rack.
8. Spread 1 teaspoon jam on a cookie and cover with another for the peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

from *Celebrate Everyday*—Idea by Kathy Faggella (First Teacher Press)

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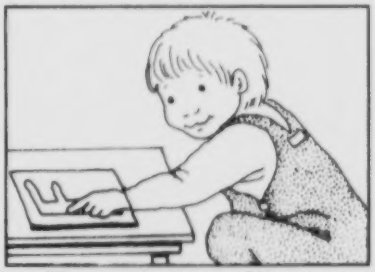
TACTILE LETTERS FROM A TO Z

by Tania K. Cowling



The recognition of letters and their sounds is a basic foundation for reading. We learn letters through all of our senses. Children cross-blend senses such as sight to feel or smell to taste. The name for this trait is *synesthesia*.

Using the sense of touch, we can create an activity that promotes alphabet learning. Children can make tactile letters. This teaches them the formation of the letter as well as the sound. Many tactile letters are made of cardboard with sand glued to the card for touch. However, by gluing materials that represent the letter sound to the cardboard, children get a more vivid impression.

Provide each child with a cardboard cutout shape of the letter you wish to study. Furnish children with collage materials and glue. They now can trace the letter with their fingers, recognize the letter shape, and understand the letter sound according to what is being glued on. Here are examples.

A apple stickers, animal pictures

B beans, buttons, blue paper, pictures of birds, bunnies, bears, Band-Aids

C cornmeal or kernels, cotton, corduroy fabric, crayon shavings

D dots (adhesive stickers), dust (sawdust shavings), dirt, dog pictures, duck pictures

E eggshells, elephant pictures, elastic pieces, egg carton pieces

F flower or fish stickers, real flower petals, feathers, pictures of foods, floss, fabric

G green glitter, grass, faux gems, colored glue, gauze

H hearts, holes (dots from a hole punch), hay

I Indian beads, ice (sprinkle salt on glue), initials (adhesive stickers)

J junk collage, jack-o-lantern stickers

K kites, pictures of kittens

L leaves, letter stickers, lace

M paper money, pictures of the moon, magazine pictures

N newspaper scraps

O orange paper pieces, oats

P pipe cleaners, pink and purple paper pieces, pebbles, pumpkin seeds

Q quilt (glue pieces of fabric, cover entire "Q" to make a quilt), quarters (cut out paper quarters), pictures of queens, question marks

R rocks (glue on aquarium gravel), ribbon, red paper pieces, rubber bands

S sand, stones, star stickers, straws, seeds, shells

T toothpicks, triangle paper pieces, tissue paper, tape (some kinds come in colors)

U pictures of umbrellas

V velvet, valentines, vegetable stickers or pictures

W walnut shells (crushed pieces), wood shavings, wire pieces, watermelon seeds, wax paper

X paper X's, pieces of X-ray film

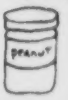
Y yarn, yellow paper pieces

Z zoo animal stickers, zigzag (rickrack trim), old zippers

MARVELOUS MUNCHIBLE LETTERS

PEANUT BUTTER PLAY DOUGH

YOU'LL NEED:



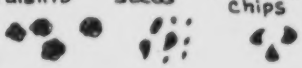
1 cup peanut butter

2/3 - 1 cup dry milk powder

3 tblsp. honey

TRIMS (OPTIONAL)

raisins seeds chocolate chips



WHAT TO DO:

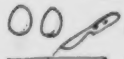
1. Adult or child mixes peanut butter with honey and dry milk powder until it is the consistency of a stiff, non-sticky play dough. (Add more or less milk powder as needed.
2. Knead 1-2 minutes.
3. Children shape peanut butter play dough into letters.
4. Children can trim letters with raisins, seeds or chocolate chips.

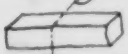
SWEET BREAD DOUGH

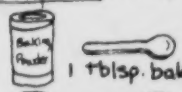
YOU'LL NEED:

1 cup warm milk

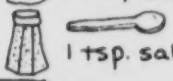
1/2 cup honey

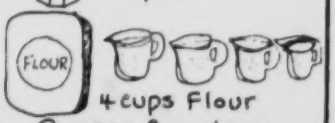

2 eggs (beaten)


1/4 cup margarine



1 tblsp. baking powder


1 tsp. salt



4 cups Flour

1 egg for glaze

baking sheet

WHAT TO DO:

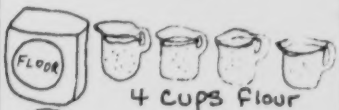
1. Mix together milk, honey and margarine.
2. Add beaten eggs
3. Add dry ingredients, a little at a time.
4. Make a stiff dough. Knead for 5 minutes.
5. Shape dough into letters.
6. Place on lightly greased baking sheet.
7. Glaze with one beaten egg.
8. Bake 15-20 minutes at 350°F.

PRETZELS

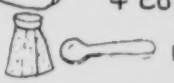
YOU'LL NEED:

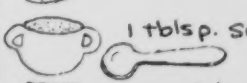
1 1/2 cups warm water

1 envelope yeast



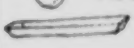
4 cups flour


1 tsp. salt


1 tblsp. sugar

sprinkling of coarse salt

1 beaten egg (glaze)


greased baking sheet

WHAT TO DO:

1. Mix together water, yeast and sugar. Set aside for 5 minutes.
2. Put salt and flour in a bowl.
3. Combine yeast mixture and flour mixture. Make a stiff dough.
4. Shape letters from dough right on greased baking sheet.
5. Brush beaten egg over letters and sprinkle with coarse salt.
6. Bake at 425°F for 12 minutes.

from *Alphabet Adventures* by Kathy Faggella (First Teacher Press)

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WRITING IS DEVELOPMENTAL

by Susan Entz

"I don't do much writing with my class. After all, they are so young; all they can do is scribble."

Preschool teachers and providers often conclude that their children are not ready for writing. While they may not be able to write a recognizable sentence yet, young children may already be participating in the early stages of writing.

The writing process is developmental. It begins very early in life and proceeds through predictable stages. Following are the stages of development in writing and how you can stimulate your children to "write."

MOTIVATION TO WRITE (FROM INFANCY)

Long before the young child picks up a pencil, a baby notices that the adults she loves and trusts read and write.

▲ Make a point of writing in front of the infant and toddler, so she grows up knowing that this is an important skill. Sit with the child in your lap or to your left, if you are right-handed, so the child can see what you are doing.

HOLDING WRITING IMPLEMENTS (FROM FIVE MONTHS)

Picking up, holding, manipulating, and finally putting down objects are necessary foundation skills to holding a writing implement. Writing requires a pincer grasp, finger strength, and coordination.

▲ For infants, provide rattles, knob toys, and toys that produce a sound when string is pulled.

▲ For toddlers, use Velcro openings, snap type clothespins. Let them pick up small snack items, feed themselves with a spoon, and play with play dough.

▲ For pre-schoolers, provide zippers, buttoning, pouring sand and water, easel painting, finger-painting, and mud play.

MARKS WITH PENCIL (BEGINS AROUND FIRST BIRTHDAY)

The child grasps a crayon, usually with her palm, making random marks on the paper.

▲ Cover a table top with newsprint and encourage children to write on the "writing table."

▲ Give the child crayons and typing paper on which to practice. Mount on construction paper and send home the framed documents.

▲ Put up a chalkboard for your beginning writers.

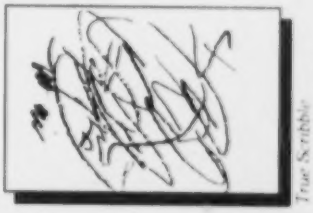
TRUE SCRIBBLE (ONE TO TWO YEARS)

The child makes long continuous usually circular lines on the page.

▲ Provide individuals with chubby crayons, primary pencils, colored pencils, and marking pens. Use large sheets of manila paper, construction paper, butcher paper, shelf paper, or computer paper

▲ Make a "drawing wall," the official spot on which to draw.

▲ Introduce marking pens under supervision.



True Scribble Ian, age 18 months

CONTROLLED SCRIBBLE (TWO TO THREE YEARS)

Greater control is evident, with the child starting and stopping at will. Horizontal, vertical lines, circular shapes

Letter Approximations
Alexander age 4 1/2 years

and continuous up and down lines predominant.

▲ Tape large sheets of butcher paper to the floor. Encourage children to work side by side to fill the paper with delightful squiggles. Display the artwork as you would a mural.

▲ Children at this stage also benefit from controlling the paint brush on a flat surface and at the easel.

▲ Encourage parents to display scribbles.

PRINT-LIKE SCRIBBLE (THREE TO FOUR YEARS)

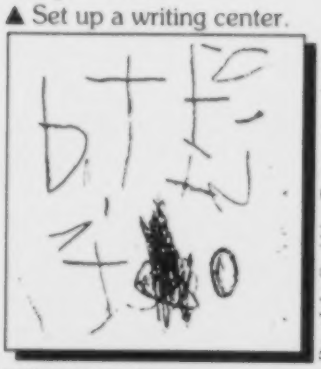
The child's pictures take on different characteristics from the linear, repetitive writing that appears, often in the same picture. This indicates that the child has noticed that adult writing has distinct features and she is trying to imitate it.

▲ Provide a variety of writing surfaces; colored typing paper, lightweight cardboard packaging, discarded greeting or holiday cards.

▲ Encourage children to sign their artwork with their name. Children know that a printed word establishes his undisputed ownership, a powerful idea.

▲ Be available to take dictation. Once a child realizes that what he says can be written down and others can read his exact words, he is on his way to being a writer.

▲ Set up a writing center.


Print Like Scribble Tommy, age 4 years

SCRIBBLE STORY (THREE TO FIVE YEARS)

When a pre-schooler fills a page with squiggles but can describe what it says in great detail, he has demonstrated that he is finally literate. His physical ability to write may still be immature, but he now has the ability to conceptualize the writing process.

▲ Prepare blank booklets to encourage young authors to record their ideas. Shape books are particularly useful.

▲ Provide time, materials, and plenty of encouragement to write.

▲ Periodically ask children to read you their stories.

▲ Include chalk and chalkboards, magic slates and stylus, and dry ink boards to vary the writing experience.

▲ Let children write outside on the sidewalk with white and colored chalk.

MOCK WRITING (FOUR TO SIX YEARS)

The marks gradually take on a letter-like appearance. The child has noticed that letters are generally constructed from lines and circles, but has not yet mastered the exact sequence or orientation.

▲ Fill the classroom with opportunities to write, particularly in dramatic play. Add a pencil and writing pad next to the telephone and "shopping lists" for the home center. Put a prescription pad and pen in the doctor's kit. Have the police officer write out tickets when she stops speeders, and the waiter write down orders at the restaurant.

▲ Put out trays of salt or sand or fingerpaint in which to "write."

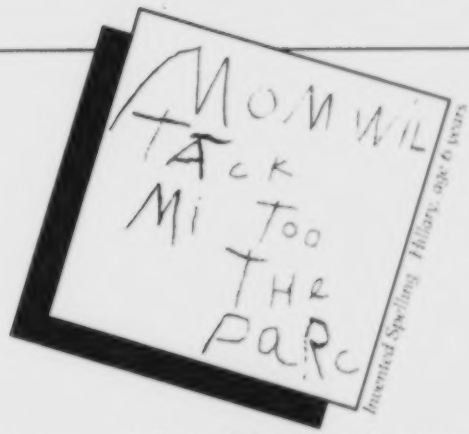
LETTER APPROXIMATIONS AND EXPERIMENTATIONS (FOUR TO SIX YEARS)

Shortly after mock writing, the child will experiment with actual letters. Letters may have extra parts (an E may have five or six horizontal lines) or an R may be backwards.

▲ Make writing an integral part of the classroom routines. Have children sign up for turns in the

This article continues on page 30

WRITING IS DEVELOPMENTAL



Invented Spelling. Hillary, age 6 years

(continued from pages 28-29

activity centers or to vote for a project. (Some children may be able to write their names legibly, but all will have their own personal script.)

▲ Help children experiment with a typewriter.

▲ Spend time in the writing center to signal its importance.

▲ Suggest appropriate writing activities: Welcome Back signs for a favorite volunteer, a Get Well card for a sick classmate, Thank You note for the secretary who made banana bread. These are "real" jobs that need to be done for the class.

ACTUAL LETTERS FORMED (FOUR TO SIX YEARS)

The sizes and orientations vary greatly but letter strokes are generally correct. Some letters may be backward. Letters with diagonals (V or W) may start with a vertical stroke.

▲ Roll modeling clay out on the table surface. Trace letters lightly on the clay. Have the child trace the letter using the correct hand grip and sequence of strokes.

▲ Remember to be a model yourself by writing lists and notes during class time.

▲ Set up mail boxes and encourage children to write messages to each other. Children learn to write by writing. Develop a program where writing is valued and shared with the rest of the class. Consider having a "author's chair," in which a published author sits as she shares her work.

▲ Provide letter stamps and a stamp pad. Some children will want to try to write the letters they have stamped.

▲ Create a "writing suitcase," filled with writing materials such as stationery and blank books to send home.

▲ Have children roll play dough logs and form them into letters.

INVENTED SPELLING (FOUR TO EIGHT YEARS)

Children begin to write down real words. Some children write one letter for each syllable they hear in the word. Others stick to the basics, including only the most "important" letters (hs for house). Still others may also write long words for large objects and short words for something small. Each child constructs her own writing system.

▲ Provide journals for children's writing.

▲ Set up math activities and science experiments so children must record their findings.

▲ Read books that indicate the importance of the written word such as: *A Letter to Amy* by Ezra Jack Keats (Harper) and The *Postman* by Rosalinda Kightley (MacMillan).

▲ Include writing activities in holiday planning, invitations to classroom activities and notes home.

▲ Bind stories into books, with decorative pages from wallpaper samplers for the cover.

▲ Develop class projects where each child contributes one page. Bind the book and then send it home with a child each night.

TRADITIONAL ORTHOGRAPHY (FIVE TO EIGHT YEARS)

Finally children have enough knowledge of the language and the sound system and the writing process to express their thoughts with traditional spelling, grammar and punctuation.

▲ Read stimulating stories and have children respond in writing— exploring characters, plots, and feelings.

▲ Plastic letters are easy to move around until the word "looks right."

▲ Encourage story writing by typing out the story and printing a hard copy. The results are quite impressive.

▲ Teach the child how to use the keyboard and eventually how to write on the computer.

IN THE BOOK CORNER

ABC—FROM AMAZON TO ZIGZAG

by Karel Kilimnik

There are a multitude of ABC books. Pick a topic and someone has probably created an alphabet book using it as a focus. Self-esteem, living creatures, quilts, Egyptian art, the Amazon, and so on. Here is a sampling of what's available.

ABC I Like Me by Nancy Carlson (Viking) Ms. Carlson's colorful characters gleefully populate this book starting with *"I am Awesome"* to *"I love to Giggle"* to *"I try to eat all my Vegetables."* Use it as a model to help children create their own alphabet book of what they like about themselves.

City Scenes from A to Z by Rachel Isadora (Mulberry Books) Ms. Isadora's stark black and white drawings set a warm and lively tone for her ABC recording of city life. *"C is for car wash"* where an open hydrant unleashes a torrent of water onto a passing car. A young girl and an old woman sit on a bench happily licking *"ice cream cones."* Black, white, Asian, young, old, cat, dog, all appear in this delightful book. Use it to create an ABC book of the neighborhood around your center or school. It's an excellent way to develop observation skills.

The Yucky Reptile Alphabet Book by Jerry Pallotta (Charlesbridge Publishing.) This is but one of Mr. Pallotta's ABC books jammed with clear illustrations and lots of information. Other books include *The Icky Bug Alphabet Book, The Bird Alphabet Book,* and *The Frog Alphabet Book.*

Amazon ABC by Kathy Darling (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books) This highly informative book comes from a mother-daughter team of naturalists. It starts with a map of the Americas and a note that the Amazon rain forest is as big as the United States. For animals with hard-to-pronounce names, the author provides a phonetic spelling. At the end of the book, a description is presented for each animal.

The Sweet and Sour Animal Book by Langston Hughes (Oxford University Press) This previously unpublished alphabet book for children by Langston Hughes is wonderfully illustrated by first, second, and third grade students at the Harlem School of Art. Their teachers posted large copies of the text and the children selected their favorite poem to illustrate. Good idea! The book includes information on Langston Hughes' life as well as the story of how this book came to be.

Navajo ABC—A Dine Alphabet Book by Luci Tapahonso and Eleanor Schick (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers) This book provides a peek into the world of T'aa Dine ("The People") also called the Navajo. From pictures of an *arroyo* to *necklace* (made from silver and turquoise) to *zas* (snow), we learn about Navajo culture and history. A glossary at the end provides background information to more fully understand each entry.

Abracadabra to Zigzag words by Nancy Lecourt (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard) The English language is peppered with *"ricochet words"* —words and phrases the mystify and magnify, words that create entire images on their own. These include "jeepers creepers," "odds and ends," "zigzag." Lecourt has provided a glossary at the end to help the reader nail down some of these slippery definitions.

26 Letters and 99 Cents by Tana Hoban (Scholastic) Bright shiny letters jump from the pages of the alphabet part of this book. Hoban mostly uses everyday objects to illustrate each letter. The book lends itself to developing left to right directionality. Flip the book over and it is a math book using coins to show each number.

STILL IN THE BOOK CORNER

123—LET'S LOOK AND SEE

by Paula Gaj Sitarz

Counting books range widely in format. There are those that depict the proper amount of items for each number and those that tell a story while teaching numbers. Other books have rhyming texts, teach history, or science concepts. Still other books are interactive.

Virginia Grossman in *Ten Little Rabbits* (Chronicle) depicts from one to ten rabbits who are dressed in Native American costume and who illustrate traditional Native American customs. For example, two rabbits are seen doing a rain dance, eight rabbits are fishing with nets, simple poles, and spears; and ten rabbits are weaving. The glossary at the end offers information on each of ten Native American tribes that relate to each illustration in their text. Children can enjoy this book at different levels depending on their ages.

Frank Mazzola Jr.'s book *Counting Is for the Birds* (Charlesbridge) also can be enjoyed in a variety of ways. The author offers a satisfying story in which a cat patiently waits to pounce on birds who land at a feeder. Ultimately the cat's efforts are thwarted by a squirrel who leaps on the feeder and sends the birds flying. Children are exposed to different types of birds who come one at a time to the feeder. In addition to an introduction to unique illustrations, a fine story, and number concepts, children also learn factual information about birds. This is presented in smaller print at the bottom of each page.

Jean Marzolla's sprightly text in rhyme is combined with David McPhail's whimsical, visually appealing, illustrations in *Ten Cats Have Hats: A Counting Book* (Scholastic). On each page, one to ten animals have something that rhymes with their name, but the girl has a hat. For example, *"Five pigs have wigs,"* and *"Eight crabs have cabs."* Finally, *"Ten cats have hats,"* just like the girl.

Another book that can be shared in various ways with children of different ages is *12 Ways to Get to 11* by Eve Merriam (Aladdin). Each illustration presents a different scenario in which the number of items mentioned add to eleven. For example, a girl in the forest gathers nine pine cones and two acorns. From the magician's hat come four banners, five rabbits, one pitcher of water, and one bouquet of flowers. The youngest child will enjoy

having this book read to him and examining the illustrations. A slightly older child will want to count the items mentioned one by one. A school age child can add the items by the way they are grouped.

- Another multipurpose counting book is *My Little House 1 2 3* adapted from the Little House books by Laura Ingalls Wilder (Harper Collins). As children count the items from one to ten they're introduced to objects found in Laura Ingalls Wilder's books for older children about frontier and pioneer life. Each illustration is accompanied by a sentence that explains the picture and is taken from one of the books in the Little House series.
- Share a straightforward counting book with children that simply presents the corresponding number of objects for each numeral. In *My First Look at Numbers* by Dorling Kindersley (Random House), children will enjoy looking at photographs of objects that will be familiar to them. They'll see one teddy bear, eight toothbrushes, ten toy cars, twenty crayons, and one hundred candies, for example. On the last double page spread children are invited to figure out how many items are shown in various sets of objects.
- In *More Than One*, Miriam Schlein (Greenwillow) presents the concept that one can be one or it can be more than one. Youngsters will see one sun and one whale. They will also see, for example, one pair of shoes that consists of two things, and one baseball team that consists of nine players. Children will learn that one can be different every time. For example in one family there can be two people, or four, or six, or more. One forest has many trees while one beach has so many grains of sand they can't be counted.
- Philemon Sturges' book *Ten Flashing Fireflies* (North South Books) is a delightful story that works on several levels. The story tells of two children who collect fireflies in a jar. After a short while, the fireflies' glow fades and the children wisely decide to release them. The text is done as a chant that children will catch on to quickly. As a counting book it works to teach addition and subtraction. There are ten fireflies. One is put in the jar and then there are nine left flying. When the next is captured there are two in the jar and eight remaining, and so on.
- Matthew Van Fleet's book *One Yellow Lion* (Dial) is an interactive book in which children see a number word and a color word on the left page and what looks like the corresponding numeral on the facing page. When you open the right-hand page the number is seen to be part of an animal. For example, the yellow numeral one is part of a lion's tail, the blue numeral five is part of a whale's mouth, and the green numeral nine is part of an alligator.
- The mice in *Mouse Count* by Ellen Stoll Walsh (Red Wagon) have become so popular that they can be purchased as stuffed animals. Walsh has illustrated her tale with bold, cut-paper collages done in solid blocks of primary colors. An extremely hungry snake gathers mice (who watched carefully for the snake, but got sleepy and took naps) and fills a glass jar with them. He gathers them in small groups but then counts them one by one until he has ten of them. A quick thinking mouse convinces the snake to hurry off and get the "big mouse over there" to fill the jar. While snake is gone, the mice rock the jar until it tips. They run home to safety. The snake discovers the "mouse" is a rock and when he returns to the jar, it's empty. In one short book, you'll find counting and a story with a plot that holds the attention of youngsters.

STILL IN THE

LETTERS, NUMBERS, AND LITERATURE

by Sandra L. Malcolm

Basic concepts are such an important experience for young children. By exploring numbers and letters through literature activities, children are able to construct meanings and develop a basis for understanding more complex ideas.

CRAZY ALPHABET

by Lynn Cox is cumulative alphabet beginning with an apple and ending with a Yowie who eats everything and bursts, leaving zero.

BEFORE READING, sing a familiar children's song, "I Know An Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly." Discuss each animal she swallowed and why. Then sing the ABC song and review the letters of the alphabet. Show the front and back cover of the book and talk about the title. Ask children what they think might be crazy about the alphabet in the story.

AFTER READING, ask: *"What kind of trouble did the bird start by eating the apple?" "How is the story the same as or different than the song we sang about the lady who swallowed the fly?" "Do the pictures look like the real thing (i.e. cat, dog, elephant, etc.)? Why or why not? Can we still tell what they are?"*

ACTIVITIES

- Re-read the story inviting children to join in as the words repeat on each page.
- Make a set of visual aides for children to manipulate as the story is re-read. Each child could be given one to hold and to stand up when her letter/picture is repeated.

TOMORROW'S ALPHABET

by George Shannon tells children that "A" is for seed." It is because the seed becomes an apple. Each letter represents what will happen tomorrow.

BEFORE READING, sing the ABC song as you review the letters of the alphabet. Then read several traditional alphabet books. Discuss examples of change such as water freezing to become ice, bread changing to toast, etc. The first time that you read the story to children, cover the right side as you read the left side of the page. Allow time for children to think about what it could become.

AFTER READING, ask: *"What did we have to think about when the author told us what each letter was for?" "What word tells us we need to wait for something to happen?" "If something hasn't happened yet, we call that the future. Tomorrow is the future."*

ACTIVITIES

- Brainstorm a list of things that change. Write all suggestions on chart paper. How can you add these to the alphabet story?
- Experiment with change: water to ice; ice to water; bread to toast; milk to butter, etc.
- Encourage children to write their own alphabet books at the writing center.
- Involve parents in *Tomorrow's Alphabet* by sending home a slip of paper each day with a different letter from the book. Have it just say "A is for seed," and so on. Encourage children to have their parents guess why "A" is for seed." The child becomes the expert in this activity.

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TIME TO....

by Bruce McMillan introduces basic concepts of time as a day in a young boy's life is described hour by hour.

BEFORE READING, have both an analog and digital clock to share. Ask children what these are used for. Encourage children to think about all of the reasons why we need to know what time it is. Write all responses on chart paper. Show the front cover of the book. What does the picture suggest about the story?

AFTER READING, look closely at each clock in the book. What stays the same? What changes? What does that tell about how to tell time? Ask: *"How many numerals are on a clock?" "Do you know how many hours are in one day?"* On chart paper or sentence strips, write the repeating phrase: *"Seven o'clock in the morning, time to...". Eight o'clock in the morning, time to ...".* What do the clocks look like for each? Compare and contrast.

ACTIVITIES

◆ Have a variety of time-tracking instruments such as analog clocks, watches of both varieties, an hour glass, a sun dial, and a cuckoo clock for children to explore. Have some old clocks that can be taken apart to investigate the mechanisms inside.
◆ Provide clock puzzles and clock manipulatives for children to practice ordering numbers.
◆ Using a camera, photograph classroom activities and a clock showing each hour of the school day. Create a poster, bulletin board, or class book depicting what activities take place at what time of the day.
◆ Have a "magic wand" that you can wave as you say:

Abra Kadabera
Kalamazoo
The clocks are all gone,
What will we do?

◆ Then say, *"Poof... the clocks have all disappeared."* Brainstorm what would happen if we had no clocks and ways we could use to still figure when to do things.
◆ Write a class story called, "The Day the Clocks Disappeared."

HOW MANY SNAILS?

by Paul Giganti, Jr. helps children discover sets and subsets. On a walk, a young child wonders about the amount and variety of things seen along the way.

BEFORE READING, ask questions following the format of the story to be read. Begin by asking *"How many children?"* then *"How many children wearing blue?"* and finally, *"How many children wearing blue are girls?"* Count after each question. Then select several other things in the classroom to count and say: *"Let's read and count our way through the story."* After reading, ask: *"As we were counting the objects on each page, what did you notice?"* (Each whole set was counted, then a subset, then a subset of the subset — each number getting smaller than the last).

ACTIVITIES

◆ Photocopy or draw several of the objects from the book. Cut out to make manipulatives to help children understand sets and subsets.
◆ Help children make discoveries about *greater than* and *less than*.
◆ Take a walk around the school or neighborhood looking for things to count.
◆ Let's name all the places the person in the story went walking to. Make a list on chart paper. Was there something to count at each place? What other places could a person walk to? Add those suggested to the chart paper. What could we count at each of these new places?
◆ Using a sentence strip and removable word card, help children make sentences beginning, *"I went walking to the ___ and I wondered how many ____ there were?"* Set this up as a learning center for small groups or individuals to use during free choice time.

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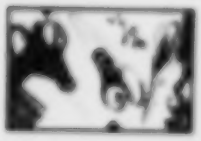

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

by Lisa Durkin

Games are important teaching tools. Babies develop games on their own. Over and over they repeat certain actions. The baby drops a toy on the floor . You pick it up. She drops it again. It's a game!

Jeannine Perez traces the stages of early game-playing in "Baby Steps Toward Big Games." She shows how the fingerplays taught to your youngest children lead to musical games, circle games, and eventually traditional games such as "Musical Chairs."

The main purpose of any game for young children is to develop and refine skills in a situation that is fun. That is why this issue of *First Teacher* brings you games to play in all areas of the curriculum: science, math, language, music, movement, and drama. For variety, Gail Jones shows you how to introduce a "Game-a-Month." And Barbara Fischer demonstrates how to make everyday routines and learning activities into games.

Some games need props and others just need players. Tania Cowling introduces games and puzzles you can make with everyday items such as clothespins and the labels from canned foods. Susan Tersoff shows you how to make games with stickers that you can use throughout the day.

As you introduce children to new games, you should keep in mind their developmental needs to insure intellectual, physical, social, and even emotional growth. Games with rules help children develop socially and emotionally. But as Sherry Burrell points out in "The Rules of the Games," *"we need to realize that children's 'rules' are actually constantly changing ideas about how the game might be creatively and imaginatively played that will make the game more fun."*

Children's literature can lead to some great games. Louise Thistle describes narrative mime/chants you can create from classic stories, fairy tales, and fables. Then, *In the Book Corner*, you'll learn how to turn the books of Tana Hoban into games of discovery.

Whatever the game, you need to remember:

- it should be fun;
- every child should have a chance to win. (But there don't need to be "winners" and "losers" in every game.)
- it should challenge the child's learning skills;
- it should be developmentally appropriate.

So relax and play games with your children. Everyone needs games to grow on.

UPCOMING THEMES FOR 1998:

MAY/JUNE:
Changes

JULY/AUGUST:
Beat the Heat

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER:
Learning Centers

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER:
Holiday Magic

LOOKING AHEAD TO 1999:

JANUARY/FEBRUARY:
Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

MARCH/APRIL:
Terrific Tools

MAY/JUNE:
Alive and Growing

JULY/AUGUST:
Outdoor Arts

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER:
New Places and Faces

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER
Once Upon a Time...

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Debby Dixler: pages 8, 9, 12, 13, 19-22

Catherine Minor: pages 7, 18, 26, 27

Louise Thisle and Emily Packer: page 31

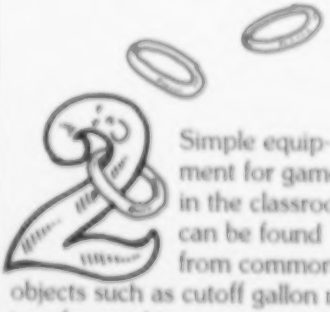
Nina Woldin: pages 5, 32, 33

HELPFUL HINTS

THE BEST WAY TO LEARN...

by Gail P. Jones

Preschool children love to play and playing games is the best way to learn the necessary skills in the emotional, social, intellectual, and physical areas of development.



Simple equipment for games in the classroom can be found from common objects such as cutoff gallon milk jugs for catching yarn or paper balls; playing cards for learning numbers, concentration, and playing *War* and *Go Fish*; plastic lids for ring toss, etc. And, leftover pieces from board games can be used to create new versions!

For every theme, you can make some related dittos of games such as mazes, dot-to-dot pictures, color-by-number, or letter pictures for free use by children.

In playing old favorite party games such as *Musical Chairs*, it isn't necessary to eliminate anyone. Just don't remove any chairs. Children under five have difficulty with winners and losers.

Try keeping a file box or ring of cards handy that contain games you can use for rainy days, waiting periods, or transitions. Your coworkers and substitutes will especially appreciate these.

Table games such as *Lotto* and *Concentration* are easy to make for each holiday throughout the year. Use matching stickers on poster-board cards and laminate them.

When playing circle games such as *Duck, Duck, Goose*, divide the group into two smaller groups so that everyone gets their turn more quickly. And, why not adapt that game to every season, for example, *Elf, Elf, Leprechaun?*

Cleaning up board games and table games can be a fun, learning experience if the parts are outlined and labeled on the bottom of the game box. (This helps to make sure all pieces are put away too!)

Let children create their own mazes with chairs and boxes. They can make board games with spinners and tossing games with foam balls.

Have fun playing games with children... (Enthusiasm is contagious!)

And, remember, anything worth doing.....is worth doing again!

TODDLER TIME

BABY STEPS TOWARD BIG GAMES

by Jeannine Perez

The first time I tried to play *Duck, Duck, Goose* with my brand new class of toddlers, I panicked when children shrieked and scattered like leaves in a windstorm. They ran around and around, (and around and around), all at the same time, but in different directions. I decided then that taking turns, sharing, following rules, and doing so without hysterics or tantrums, is a learned skill that requires time and patience!

Taking many tiny steps in growing, celebrating small successes, and ignoring some monumental failures, my class did learn to play together. By the end of that first year, my children were playing circle and other group games with a success rate of (at least) 60%.

To understand some reasons for the difficulty in participating in circle games, we must understand that toddlers believe the world centers around them. Sharing and taking turns are learned behaviors, not natural attributes. Each child goes through the same natural stages in socialization. The activities we should choose reflect these stages.

Fingerplays are one kind of group activity in which each toddler feels independent and yet each child is also a part of the group. Small children love fingerplays, and these then become a first step in more sophisticated play. My children love "Where is Thumbkin?" We incorporate fingerplays into many of the songs, poems, and repetitive stories that we use in group circle times. They can be very simple, but allow each child a chance to express or respond to what they are hearing. For example, the familiar story of "The Three Bears" offers opportunities for young children to pretend to knock, open a door, taste porridge, test chairs and beds, and fall asleep. The earlier we introduce responding with our bodies and role playing to children, the more comfortable children will feel later about expressing themselves through drama.

Musical games come next. Music seems to be a magic ingredient in the socialization process. We all feel a part of an activity when we sing or clap with a group. I like games with actions, and also ones in which each child can move within her own "safe" space and around the room.

Now we are ready to begin **group games**. Plan games in which everyone can participate... And all at the same time.

A good beginning, and an accomplishment in itself is gathering children into a circle. To accustom them to the idea of circle play, ask your toddlers to hold hands (in a circle), and play a few singing or chanting games going around slowly, then changing direction, and finally sitting down in that formation. All toddlers love to play *Ring Around the Rosie*, and we chant "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," "If You're Happy and You Know It," and "Farmer In the Dell." We also join hands in a circle whenever we have group time, then plop down together. Once your toddlers do this naturally, you have accomplished a big step in introducing the structure required to play games.

Another favorite is "Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush." You make this as long or short as you like by changing the actions. "*This is the way we clap our hands...stamp our feet...turn around...sit right down.*"

We play I Spy during circle games. The mystery item can be described by naming shapes, colors, or sizes. Start by singing. (Tune: "Are You Sleeping") "*I see something, I see something, it is big, it is blue. Can you see what I see? Please tell me what I see. It's a _____. It's a _____.*" Encourage everyone to sing the answer.

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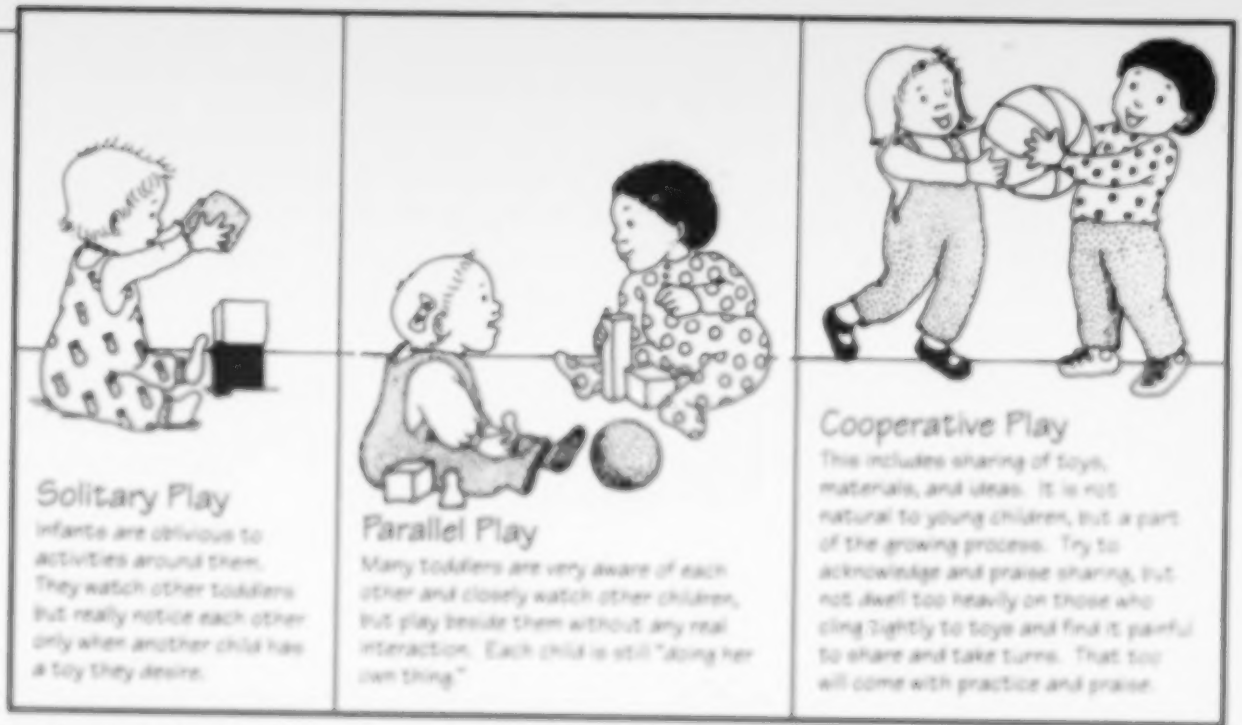


Solitary Play

Infants are oblivious to activities around them. They watch other toddlers but really notice each other only when another child has a toy they desire.

Parallel Play

Many toddlers are very aware of each other and closely watch other children, but play beside them without any real interaction. Each child is still "doing her own thing."

Cooperative Play

This includes sharing of toys, materials, and ideas. It is not natural to young children, but a part of the growing process. Try to acknowledge and praise sharing, but not dwell too heavily on those who cling tightly to toys and find it painful to share and take turns. That too will come with practice and praise.

Sometimes I ask children to close their eyes and identify the sound of an object (rattle, drum, book dropping, chair scraping across the floor, or any other object that makes a sound). Know that someone (or several children) will inevitably peek, so keep the game short and funny.

A logical next step might be **Musical Chairs**. By this time your children have hopefully discovered that the ones who sit down or sit out are part of the fun, and not the losers. I give these children the title of *Audience* and the responsibility for clapping and singing the loudest.

Sometimes we don't sit out, we crowd in! When we play this game, we use hula hoops or half circles instead of chairs. Each time a space is "closed," we stop and try to figure out how to fit more children in the spaces left. One bright toddler figured out that EVERYBODY could fit in one circle, if we all just put an arm or leg inside the circle.

Next, we progress to simple games that require a little more patience. I begin by forming a circle and plopping down, then directing the children to sit with their legs spread. I gently roll a large soft ball to one child, using their name and saying, *"I'm going to roll the blue ball to Johnnie. Can you catch the blue ball, Johnnie?" "Now give it a good bye squeeze, and roll the ball to Jeremy."* Try to keep the ball traveling around the circle. Be sure that each child realizes that they are not relinquishing the ball forever. Also see to it that each child gets more than one turn. Keep the ball and the game moving. Once children get the idea that games last long enough for everyone to participate, they will be more willing to wait (at least 30 seconds or so).

Begin with games that have only a few basic rules. The more rules you try to explain to toddlers, the more confusing and less fun the game is for you and them. Speak slowly and clearly when giving directions. When children are comfortable with one rule or direction, give them another.

Play another circle game using music. Pass a beanbag or small ball around the circle while the music plays. When the music stops, the child holding the object quickly passes it on and sits down. Vary the tempo of the music and encourage children who are sitting to clap to the beat.

Now that you've made such great gains in encouraging your children to act appropriately in group games, try other old favorite games with them. Variations to *Freeze Tag* and *Duck, Duck, Goose* are fun. If, in the middle of a game, your children suddenly jump up and run wildly around while screaming with joy and happiness, give up and join them in their purposeless flight! Treasure and enjoy the toddler sense of fun.

THE RULES OF THE GAME

by Sherry Burrell

"*You cheated!*" This phrase makes the hair stand up on the back of the neck of many morally minded adults. Adults who hear these words being screamed in a children's game immediately want to intervene to make the game "fair." But children usually begin shouting these words before they are old enough to really understand what it means to "cheat."

Young children create their own "rules" in the games they play, and often, the children's rules bear very little resemblance to what adults might think of as "rules." Children enjoy the process of playing the game, and it can be very difficult for adults to understand the simplicity of that concept.

"You Cheated!"

Think about it. How often have you heard a child younger than nine or ten accuse someone with the words, "*You cheated*"? Rarely? Usually, older children are the ones who use this phrase. When a young child uses this phrase, he is probably just "trying out" words he has heard someone older use in a game. In order to use this accusation accurately, a person would have to be mature enough to know the "formal" rules of the game, would have to be astute enough to be able to detect another person's attempt to skirt the rules, would have to care more about "winning" than playing, and would have to be emotionally mature enough to feel outraged by the "unfairness" of the "cheating" situation.

Most young children don't meet any of those basic requirements. They just play the game by the "rules" the way they understand those rules. They are focused on themselves, and only care how the game is going for them. Egocentric and fun-loving, most children are "playing" the game itself. The adult's version of the formal rules often ruin the fun for the child, but most young children endure this experience because it gives them some "quality time" with an adult whom they care about.

We should not expect young children to play games with predetermined "rules" with one another in the same way as those children might be expected to play with an adult. Young children enjoy the simple process of playing the game far more than the ending outcome. Encourage, allow, and celebrate the fact that young children will play their games their own way.

If we encourage children to play games with "rules," we must change our own concept of what "rules" are. If we realize that children's "rules" are actually constantly changing ideas about how the game might be creatively and imaginatively played that will make the game more fun, then we should encourage children to follow these "rules" or "ideas." When a young child shouts out to a playmate, "*I know, let's...*" (gives a new rule or idea), we should encourage everyone in the game to listen to the idea and give it a try.

An adult observer who doesn't understand this concept may very well think that someone is being taken advantage of, that the game is unfair, or that the "winner" (if one is declared) cheated. But watch the children. Did they enjoy themselves? Did they follow their imaginations, and did they let the game flow as it mixed everyone's ideas into the fantasy of the play? Did children take turns suggesting "rules" or ideas, and did those ideas enhance the game for everyone as the game evolved?

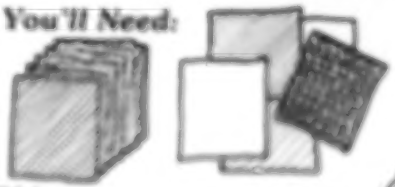
ADAPTING COMMON GAMES

When traditional games are taught to young children, they immediately begin adapting those games to make them more fun. It seems automatic! If left without adult "supervision" (interference), young children playing *Musical Chairs* will spontaneously let everyone keep playing even if someone is officially "out," because they don't want anyone to feel badly about the game. *Musical Chairs* is just as much (or more) fun to young children when chairs are not removed one by one, and no "winner" is declared. For them, the fun is in the delight of finding a chair quickly when the music stops! It is delightful to sit on someone's lap, to fit two or three friends on one single chair, and to laugh together throughout the playing of the music. Why do adults ruin these joyful adaptations of traditional games by correcting how children play them?

Encourage children to create their own games and adapt common group games and board games so that everyone enjoys playing. If you find ways to make games both educational and challenging while still being fun, adults will take notice, and learn how to truly "play"!

COLOR DOMINOES

You'll Need:



36 heavy cardboard rectangles (about 1" X 3")

construction paper (red, orange, blue, yellow, purple)

glue

scissors

(optional) clear contact paper

How to Make Color Dominoes:

1. Draw a line down the middle of each card.
2. Glue onto the cardboard on both sides of the line a piece of construction paper—1" X 1 1/2", using all color combinations.

Samples:

RED	RED	RED	ORANGE	GREEN	BLUE	BLUE	BLUE
RED	YELLOW	YELLOW	YELLOW	RED	BLUE	GREEN	GREEN

3. If possible, combine cards with clear contact paper.

How to Play:

BLUE							
GREEN							
GREEN							
YELLOW							
YELLOW	YELLOW	YELLOW	RED	RED	GREEN	GREEN	GREEN

1. Turn all cards color side down.
2. Have each player choose seven cards and put the rest go into the middle.
3. Each player turns over his cards.
4. One player begins by placing one of his cards in the center of the play area.
5. Each player takes turns adding one card which matches in color to either end of the cards in the center. If a player cannot match either end, he must continue to draw a card from the middle pile until he can put one down.

MAKE IT A GAME

by Barbara Fischer

Games have a special appeal to children and teachers alike. Games can be used to introduce themes and concepts, to sharpen skills, to ease transition time, to calm children, and to just have fun. With a little imagination you can turn everyday activities into games. Here are some games for you to try all day long.

THEMES

- To introduce a farm theme, try *Now You See It, Now You Don't*. Place a toy barn with the animals in front of the children on the floor. Point to and name each animal with children. Place a "magic scarf" over the animals and take one away. Lift the scarf and ask children which animal is missing. Encourage children to name the animal and to find the place where it stood. You might ask what sound this animal makes. Continue until all children have had a turn.
- For a spring theme, gather many different seed packets (two of each kind) and spread them out on a table. Ask one child to choose one packet. Ask another child to find a matching packet. Let each child have a chance to find a match. (Nurseries will often give you packets from last year.)

SKILL SHARPENERS

- Colors and patterns can also be made into games. Cut out squares of wallpaper using both solid colors and repeating patterns. Look for plaids and stripes. Let children take turns finding the matching patterns. For a variation, try a memory game and turn all the squares face down. Each child turns one card over, trying to remember where the matching card was.
- Another fun game is *Color Jump*. For this game arrange colored carpet squares, colored construction paper, or interlocking mat squares in a large rectangle. The squares should be large enough for each child to jump on with two feet. Begin by asking one child to jump on all the red squares and then jump out. Vary the color pattern with each child.
- *Counting Time* is fun to use with a small group of children at circle time. Count children and place the same number of colored blocks (use only two colors) in the center. Now count just the boys using one of the same colored blocks for each boy. Do the same for the girls with the other color. Place these blocks side by side with the boys in one row, girls in the other. Ask if there are more boys or girls. The colored blocks make it easier for children to understand one-to-one correspondence. For a different twist, ask one child to leave the area. Take one block away. How many are left? What happens when that child comes back?
- Use several colors of these same blocks for a sequencing game. Place three blocks, using two colors, in a pattern: red/blue/red. What color comes next? Make different patterns by adding more colors as the children increase their skill.
- Are you working on shapes? Then play *Shape, Shape, Find the Shape*. Place a shape on the floor. Invite a child to find an object with that same shape and place it on the floor by the shape. Let each child have a turn using different shapes.
- When it comes to number time try *Number on the Circle*. Make two circles with masking tape on the floor. Place a card with a number in each circle. Ask a child to find the same number of toys as the printed number in each circle. Place these toys in the correct circle. You might want to substitute colored squares for numbers. Just ask someone to find an object in the room with a matching color.
- Turn *Duck, Duck, Goose* into a color game. Give a small colored card to the child running

around the circle. As that child sits down in the empty spot, she holds the color up for all to name.

LANGUAGE ARTS

- Many nursery rhymes can be turned into mini plays. *Little Miss Muffit* works well for this type of activity. One child sits on a chair pretending to eat while the "spider" comes crawling across the floor on cue to "frighten" her. Miss Muffit runs away. Chant the rhyme as children act it out.

Jack Be Nimble is a good jumping game for circle time. Place a short stubby candle in a holder on the floor. Children chant the rhyme while "Jack" jumps over the candle. Stress the word *over* to reinforce this concept.

Hickory, Dickory, Dock can also be used this way. One child, the clock, stands in the center of the circle. As children say the word *mouse*, the "clock" chooses a child who crawls to the "clock" and stands up. Everyone claps their hands on the word *one* and the "mouse" runs back to his place in the circle.

TRANSITION TIME

- Try this game to ease changes of activities. Give each child a color card when it is time for a change. Ask children to stand in a line holding their cards up high. See the rainbow of colors they created? Animal cards also work well.

OUTSIDE TIME

- Play *Shadow Tag* substituting stepping on each other's shadow for tagging. Help children to become aware of the way shadows change depending on where they stand. Ask: "Why did your shadow disappear?" "Why does it grow long?" "Why do you have a shadow?" Encourage children to ask questions.
- Bouncing balls makes throwing and catching balls more fun and adds to learning too. While you play ball count the number of bounces the ball makes as it goes back and forth. Encourage rhythmic patterns to the bounces as children become more confident.
- The simple game of bean bag toss can provide endless possibilities for learning. Try these, then create your own variations.

Concepts: Toss the bean bags on numbers, shapes, under and over rope, or between two chairs.

Colors: Toss bean bags into colored hula hoops or on colored squares.

Music: Play a music tape while children pass a bean bag around the circle. When the music stops, the child holds on to the bean bag. Resume music and continue as before.

A FEW TIPS

- Make color cards from construction paper. Laminate or cover with contact paper to make them durable. Do the same with the wallpaper colors and patterns. Store these in plastic bags so that they are available when you need them.
- Games, fun and children are "go together." These games also have a serious side as they help children understand concepts and themes. Physical games enable children to encourage their minds and bodies to work together. There are games for all the times of your day. Make sure your day has time for games.

6 HOMEMADE GAMES AND PUZZLES

by Tania K. Cowling

Welcome to the world of imagination! It's a place where we can take ordinary throw-aways, a little paper, paint, glue, and this imagination to create fun toys. Toys stimulate learning. When a child plays—he learns. Unfortunately toys and games are expensive; it's difficult to provide every variety available on today's market. Try homemade toys and games—they are fun, rewarding to make, and when children are tired of them, the materials can be recycled again. A great "Earth Day" lesson!

BOXY PUZZLES

What to Do:

1. Cut off the front panels of empty cereal or cookie boxes, ones that children recognize.
2. Cut each panel into zig zag puzzle pieces. The amount of pieces should vary in difficulty according to the age of the children.
3. Code the back of your pieces with a number, such as all pieces to the first box could be labeled #1, another puzzle front could be all #2.
4. For durability, laminate these pieces with a clear adhesive plastic. Store each puzzle in a zip-locking, plastic bag after each use.

"RATTLE" CAN

What to Do:

1. Save plastic milk jug lids.
2. Take a coffee can and cut an X into the plastic lid on top. These cans can be left "as is" or decorated. Teachers and caregivers can spray paint the cans in bright colors and attach whimsical stickers.

How to Play:

The child will push the jug lids through the X into the can. The rattle sound excites the younger child. When finished, remove the lid, empty the can— it's time to start again.

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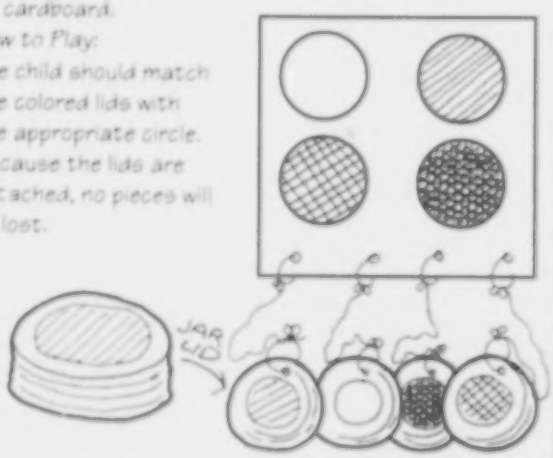
COLOR MATCH BOARD

What to Do:

1. Save jar lids in different colors. (Metal lids work best.)
2. Attach jar lids to yarn strings by punching a hole into the lid with a large nail. Tape any sharp edges.
3. Attach these strings to a piece of heavy cardboard about 12" x 15".
4. Cut circles out of construction paper, using the same colors as the lids. Glue these onto the cardboard.

How to Play:

The child should match the colored lids with the appropriate circle. Because the lids are attached, no pieces will be lost.



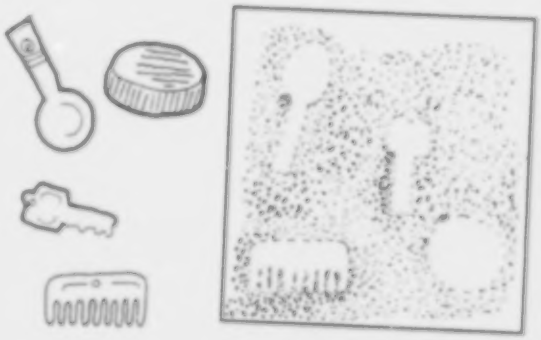
SILHOUETTE PUZZLES

What to Do:

1. Gather together several small household items such as jar lids, combs, plastic spoons, unsharpened pencils, old keys, clothespins, etc.
2. Take a heavy piece of cardboard and simply arrange these items in any order.
3. Spray paint the entire surface. After the paint dries; remove the items. The silhouette of each item will remain unpainted.

How to Play:

The child can match the item to the correct shape.



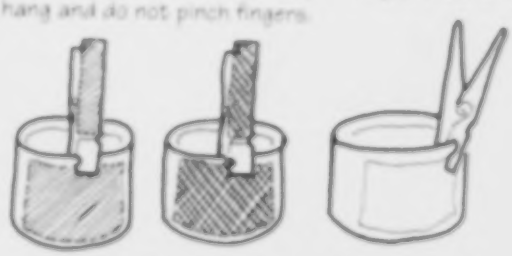
CLOTHESPIN CANS

What to Do:

1. Paint wooden clothespins in primary colors (red, yellow, and blue). You can also paint clothespins in other colors.
2. You will need cans or plastic containers (as many as the colors you have painted). Paint a square of the color on the container—one container for each color.

How to Play:

The children can play two color classifying games. They can drop the pins into the correct colored can or line the clothespins; attaching them along the rim. NOTE: If this game is for the very young child, it would be best to use the old-fashioned hook clothespins, not the spring-action type. They are easier to hang and do not pinch fingers.



LABEL LOTTO

What to Do:

1. Save labels from canned goods, at least two of each food.
2. On heavy cardboard, make a playing board with square sections. Paste one of each pair of labels in a square.
3. Make playing cards with the remaining labels. (Use index cards.)

How to Play: With a stacked deck, flip over each card and match it to the board. This game promotes visual perception skills.

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STICK WITH STICKERS

by Susan Tersoff

They are fun, colorful, easy to find, and not too expensive. Children enjoy them as toys or rewards. But stickers are also wonderful teaching tools. They are available in a variety of themes such as weather, colors, community helpers, animals, dinosaurs, holidays, nursery rhymes, and Bible stories to name only a few. Teacher stores and catalogues have the widest selection, but drugstores, toy stores, and party shops also carry stickers.

Working with stickers, children develop fine-motor control and eye-hand coordination. Depending on the task, they may verbalize and interact with others, as well as use their imaginations. Last, but not least, children have fun!

As far as games and activities with stickers, the possibilities are endless. The key is teacher creativity. Here are some ideas for pre-schoolers.

Create a Story During Teddy Bear Week, for example, let children choose from a variety of teddy bear stickers. After arranging stickers on paper, have them dictate a story about the picture. (Older children could write their story.) Some children also might want to color their picture.

One-to-One-Correspondence Fold a piece of paper into eighths. Draw a line along the folds so that the boxes are clearly visible. Let the child put a sticker into each box, going from left to right and from top to bottom. (Make sure that the stickers are not too big for the boxes.)

Matching Have four different pairs of stickers (for example, two suns, two snowflakes, two raindrops, and two clouds). After talking about the stickers, fold a piece of paper in half vertically. The teacher or child takes one of each sticker and puts it in a column to the left of the fold. Arrange the other four stickers in a column to the right of the fold. Then the child draws a line between the stickers that match.

Colors Use a variety of colors of dots. After putting them on paper, the child could draw red circles around the red dots, draw a yellow line to connect all the yellow dots, put all the red dots in one row and all the green dots in a different row, or make a pattern alternating red/green/red/green.

Counting Fold a piece of paper in fourths. In the first box, write 0, in the second box write 1, etc. (Depending on the child's level, you might also draw a dot in box 1, two dots in box 2, etc.) The child reads the numeral or counts the dots and puts the correct number of stickers in the box. Continue as long as the child is interested and successful.

What Doesn't Belong? Put four stickers in a row on a piece of paper. Use three stickers that have something in common and one that doesn't belong, such as three stars and a cat. The child circles the sticker that doesn't belong and explains her reasoning. For older children, use a more challenging selection of stickers. You may gain insight into a child's thought processes as you hear the reason for her choice.

Prepositions Draw a horizontal line on a piece of paper. Ask the child to place a sticker above, below, on, under, or over the line. Or let the child place the sticker where she wants and use prepositions to describe the location. Draw lines or circles of different colors. Ask the child to put a sticker inside the red circle or next to the blue line.

Lotto Draw lines on a piece of paper to divide it into nine sections, like a tic-tac-toe board. Have nine different pairs of stickers. Put a different sticker in each square. Laminate the lotto board or cover it with contact paper. Cut out nine squares the same size as the squares on the board. Using the

remaining stickers, put one on each square and laminate or cover with contact paper. Let children choose squares and place them on the matching sticker on the board.

☺ **Patterns** Using colored dots, create a pattern such as red/yellow/red/yellow for the child to copy. Increase the challenge with red/yellow/yellow/red, etc. Or use picture stickers to create a pattern of star/cat/star/cat. A child could create a pattern for you or a classmate to continue.

☺ **Themes** Take out stickers you have used recently for units of study, such as bears for Teddy Bear Week, leaves for fall, apples for Apple Day, and ghosts for Halloween. The child chooses a sticker from each unit, places it on a piece of paper and dictates or writes something he remembers about the unit. Teachers can gain insight into the child by how much—and what details—he remembers.

☺ **Scents and Textures** For a Five Senses unit, children can smell a variety of scented stickers. Fold a piece of paper in half. On one side, write *"Smells I Like"* and on the other side, *"Smells I Don't Like."* Children can draw a happy face and a sad face in the appropriate place, too. After smelling a sticker, each child places it on either half of the paper, according to her reaction. For textures, children can touch stickers which are smooth, fuzzy, bumpy, smooth with googly eyes, and so on, place them on paper, and describe the different textures.

☺ **Easter/Passover** Children can use stickers to retell and review holiday stories. Or you can create matching games for Easter eggs . You can draw a large oval shape on a piece of paper and encourage children to use stickers to decorate the "Easter egg." Children might use stickers on construction paper to create decorative placemats for the Seder table at Passover.

You will find many more ways to use stickers to challenge children and help them learn. Stick with stickers! Make them an important part of your curriculum!

SCIENCE GAMES

by Susan Entz

Young children create their own understandings of the world. They are able to learn complicated concepts by having a caring adult first point out their real life examples and then describe the concepts in words that children understand. Children may then act out their understanding in dramatic play. Another way to help children grasp complex science concepts is to develop cooperative learning games that feature that idea.

Here are a few games that feature science concepts.

Attract/Repel *(Magnets attract some materials and repel others.)* Assemble a variety of metal objects (a screw, nail, paper clip, metal spoon, etc.) and nonmetallic objects (a toothbrush, plastic spoon, crayon, sock, etc.) Form a circle and have each child select one object. Select a leader who holds a magnet. The leader then goes around the circle and tests the magnet. If the object is attracted, that child stands up, says *"The magnet attracts me,"* and grasps one hand of the leader. If not, she says, *"The magnet repels me,"* and hurries away to a designated safe spot. The leader repeats the process, adding to his chain of objects that the magnet attracts and to the group scurrying away.

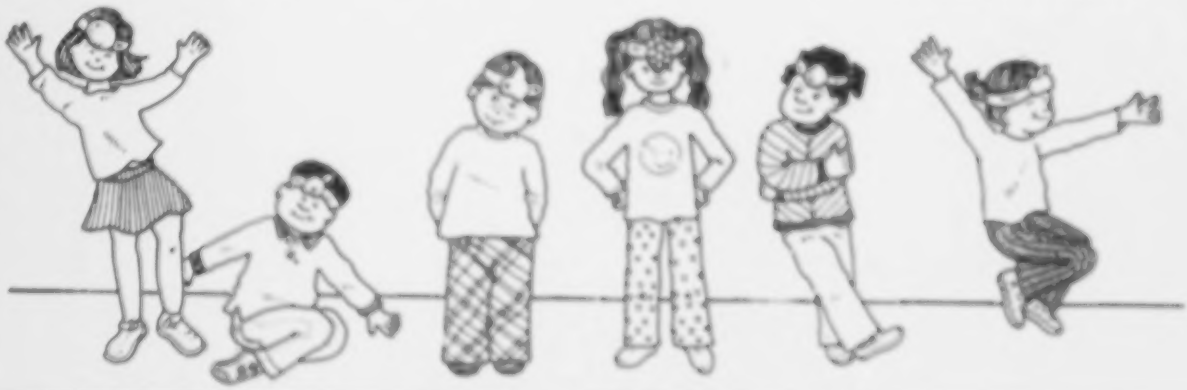
OOPS, All Fall Down *(Gravity pulls objects to earth.)* Make headbands featuring different fruits or use plastic fruits from the dramatic play area. Ask each child to pretend to be a fruit, ripening on a tree.

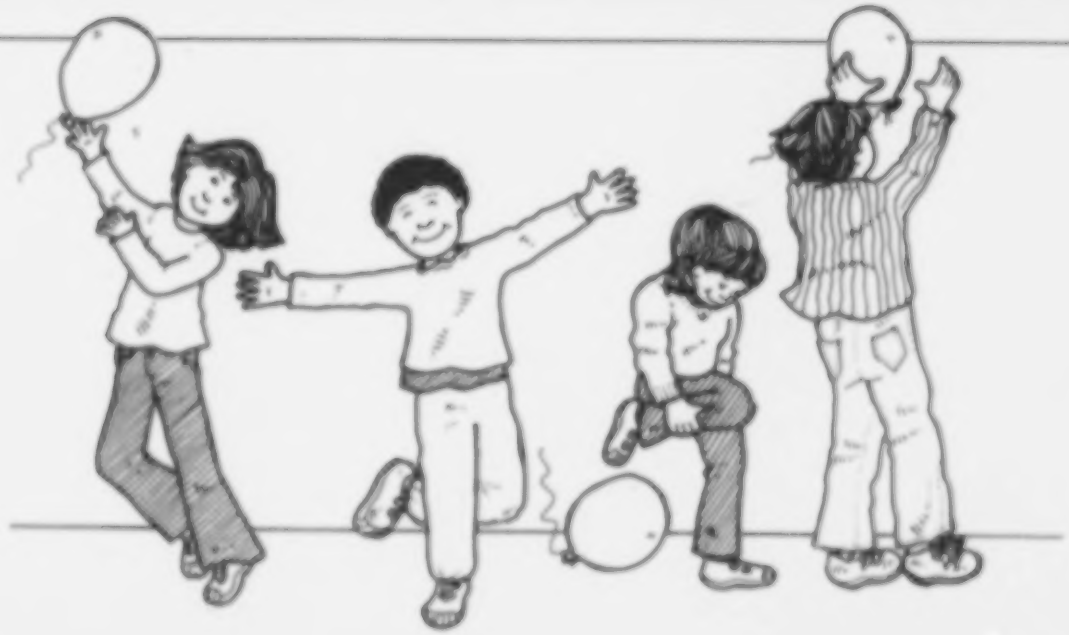
Sing the following song, to the tune of "I'm A Little Teapot," substituting the name of different fruits. As each fruit is named, those children holding that object or wearing that headband may fall to the ground as they sing.

I'm a little _____ (orange).
Small and round
On the tree top
I am found
Gravity will pull me
To the ground,
And then the farmer
Will sell me in town.

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall *(Mirror reflections are made when beams of light are reflected.)* After experimenting with ones own reflection, have children pair off so one child can mirror what the other does exactly. Once the pairs are facing each other, the lead child moves and the other child must mirror the action exactly. Play for two minutes and then signal children to change roles.

Hercules, the Smart *(Levers help lift objects.)* Ask the group if they think they can lift another two children off the ground at one time. After a brief discussion, place a block at





the mid point beneath a sturdy, 18 inch wide board. Have two children stand on one end of the board. Ask the group if they think one child can lift them using the board. Help him onto the board and notice what happens. Then have all of the children get off and move the box toward the end that held the two children. Replace the board and watch the one child lift the two off the ground, using leverage. (Note: Do this activity with adult supervision.)

Travel Loops *(Current electricity travels in closed loops.)* Have a leader move to any part of the room, and select a second child who will stand next to him, holding one hand. Each successive child chooses a new partner to add to the chain. The chain can take any form, but the last child must hook up with the free hand of the leader. Once the circuit is closed, the leader can send an electrical message around the loop by squeezing the hand of the next child, who then does the same until the impulse returns to the leader.

Freeze/Flow/Fizzle *(There are solids, liquids and gasses in the world.)* After learning about these different properties, get the "wigglies" out with this simple game. Have children stand up, move around the room, and then hold perfectly still when you call, "*Freeze.*" When you say, "*Flow,*" children may lay down on the floor and roll from place to place. When you say "*Fizzle,*" have children stand up on their toes and raise their wiggling fingers as their gases fizzle away.

Big Brown Bear *(Some animals hibernate.)* Play a simple group game, depicting the life of a brown bear. Have children sit in the circle and select three or four children to be bears first. Describe one bear activity and have them walk around the circle. For example, bears could fish for salmon, pick blueberries, wade through a river, walk through a meadow, chase another bear. Periodically, have the "bears" come to the middle of the circle to "hibernate."

Air Bag Toss *(Air takes up space.)* Give each pair of players four small zip-locking bags, highlighted with permanent markers in a particular color. Show children how to zip most of the opening closed and then blow into the small opening, filling the bag. Then quickly seal the end to trap the air inside. Gather the teams around an empty box, three feet from an edge. Each team tries to toss as many of their air bags into the box as possible.

Static Electricity Race *(Static electricity makes things stick together.)* Blow up several small balloons and place them in a basket near a wall. Have three or four children at a time move across the room using different modes of locomotion (run, crawl, hop, skip, roll, creep, crab walk, spin). Then have them pick up a balloon, rub it vigorously against their clothing (10-20 times), and then stick it to the wall and run back to their team mates. Repeat with the next line of children.

LAUGH A LITTLE

HOURS OF FUN???

by
Mary Beth Spann Minucci

Few things are more pathetic than games and toys promising "hours of fun" that don't deliver. What playthings besides thumbtacks, staplers, or electrical outlets—have ever held your kids' attention for more than a nano second? Before you scout the spring garage sales hoping to find the perfect, engrossing toy for kids to enjoy, let's take a cold, hard look at some so-called childhood favorites, plus ways to put these toys to better use if you already own them.

○ **Bat and Ball** After three tries up at bat, everyone realizes no pre-schooler can bat a ball, no matter how big and fat they make the equipment. Better to turn the bat into a limbo stick or pretend it's a crutch and drop the baseball action before somebody really gets hurt.

○ **Hula-Hoops** Don't offer children these unless you plan on demonstrating how to use them. Beware—if you're older than eleven, hula-hooping can be quite humiliating, not to mention a medical hazard. These classic hoops have their place, but not around your middle. Try pretending they're circus hoops for pretend tigers to jump through. Or, place one on the ground and use as base for *Hide and Seek*. But, do discourage children from using the hoops to play ring toss with you as the human stake.

○ **Horseshoes** So ridiculously difficult to score a ringer, this game is guaranteed to frustrate and discourage. A good purchase, however, if you're in the market for some costume jewelry for your dress up corner—kids can't resist measuring to see if the shoes work best as a necklace or a tiara.

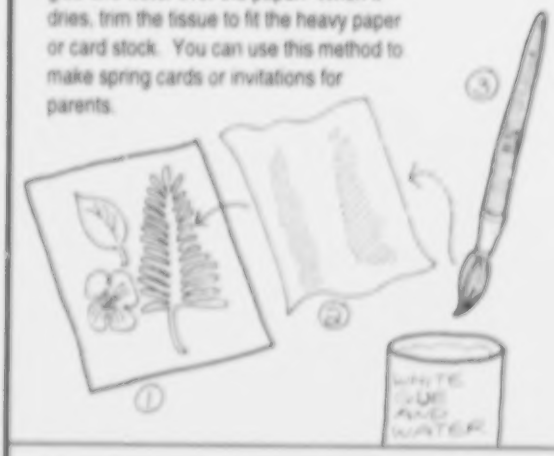
○ **Motorized Bubble Machines** Give me a break! Do we want our children to be so coddled they can't pucker up and blow their own air through a bubble wand? Next we'll be buying blocks that stack themselves and dolls that play alone. About the only advantage to this type of bubble maker is that kids may realize the old fashioned dip-n-blow way is better than letting a machine with half-dead batteries have all the fun.

○ **Golf Games** Picture this: a small child struggles with a large oversized florescent golf club in an attempt to hit a small plastic golf ball into a plastic cup. Unless the kid is named Tiger, this activity will keep this little one busy for ten seconds at best. Of course, the real fun begins when she finds much more interesting things to do with a two-foot long L-shaped piece of plastic. Gulp! Before disaster strikes, try tracing children's bodies on craft paper and mounting them on the clubs to create giant stick puppets. Now there's an activity that just might really keep them busy for hours!

GREEN ART

MAKE SPRING LEAF PRINTS.

Collect grasses, clovers, ferns, leaves, and flat flowers. Help children carefully glue the greenery in a pleasing composition onto heavy paper or card stock. Lay thin tissue paper or one layer of a napkin over the card. Brush a thin mixture of white glue and water over the paper. When it dries, trim the tissue to fit the heavy paper or card stock. You can use this method to make spring cards or invitations for parents.



PAINT A PICTURE IN SPRING GREENS.

Mix many shades of green paint (light to dark, yellow greens to blue greens). It's easiest to do this by beginning with basic green, then adding small amounts of other colors. Encourage children to paint a green picture on heavy paper or posterboard, using cotton swabs or pencil erasers to form many small dots of color. Caution them not to mix the shades together, but to overlap or paint the different colors next to each other "like neighbors." This is great practice for young children who love to keep mixing paints on the paper until the colors become muddy. When the green pictures are dry, use them as backgrounds for magazine cutouts or spring scenes, or pictures of leprechauns children have drawn, colored, and cut out.

GREEN GAMES

LEPRECHAUN GOLD

Cut out many gold paper circles, and write and draw simple directions on each. Then hide the gold (during nap time). Make a leprechaun's pot by folding the top of a paper lunch bag down several times, then stapling a paper strip to each side so that it resembles a small pot. Turn children loose for a treasure hunt after nap time. Set a limit to coins they can find. Then they can help others (those wanting help) to find gold coins. Everyone drops their coins in "the pot." At circle time, pull out and read the coins and have children act out the directions on them. "Turn around three times and sit down." "Clap your hands twice and shake your neighbor's hand". "Wave your hands and jump up and down three times."

PLAY "DROP THE SHAMROCK."

Cut a shamrock from green paper. Ask children to stand in a circle, then give IT the shamrock. Play the game like you would play DUCK, DUCK, GOOSE.

FLY A KITE.

Ask children to draw a picture of themselves on diamond shapes cut from green paper. Make tails with yarn and crushed tissue paper. Attach a tail to each kite and fill your windows with green kites.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY FUN

Leprechauns & Listening Games

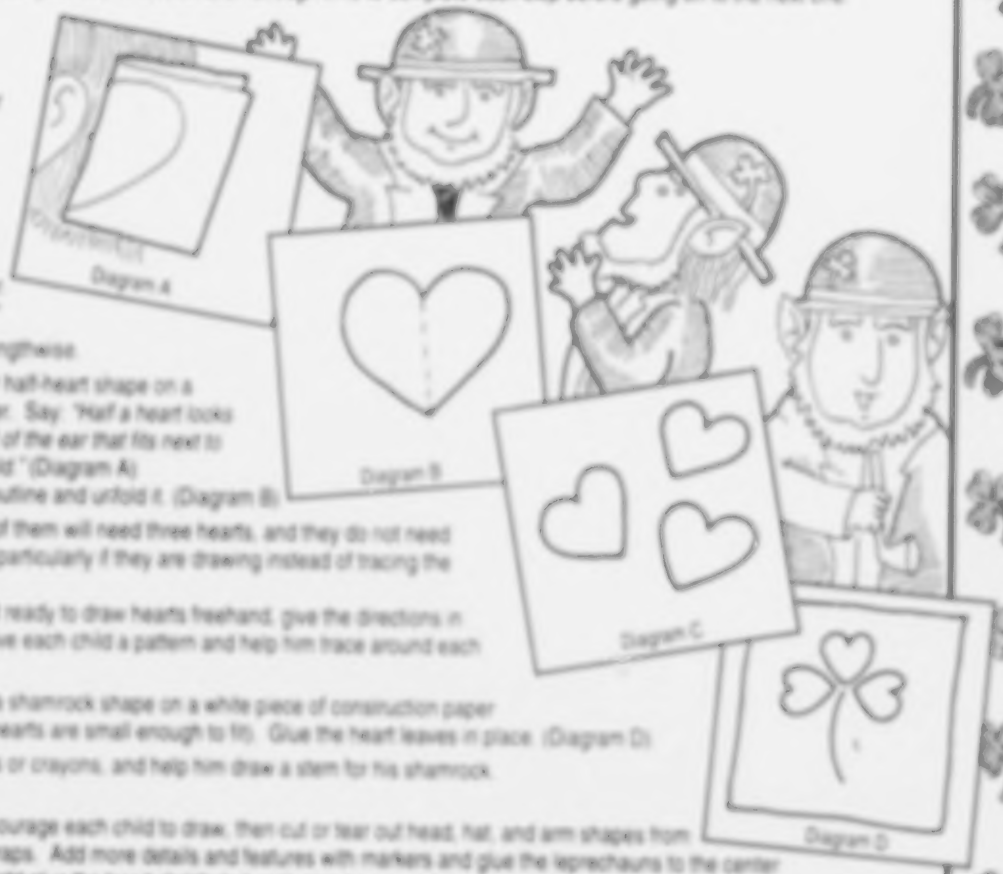
by Jeannine Perez

At this time of year, we all long for any signs of spring green. How lucky that we can celebrate leprechauns and St. Patrick's day in a surge of green; we can have fun and learn new skills all at the same time. Here are some ideas to banish the winter doldrums in your class. With a green classroom, we all know that spring is right around the corner!

DECORATE WITH SHAMROCKS

Following directions is an evolving skill for young children. It is also a gradual process. As with other forms of learning, it is best to begin with the simple and progress to the more complex. We begin this learning process with one clear direction, then progress to two, three and even four step directions. Art projects are wonderful activities to begin the process.

Make green shamrocks to decorate your room, and also as an exercise in giving and following directions. Tell, then demonstrate, each step in the process. Allow children enough time to complete each step before going on to the next one.



You'll Need
green paper • white paper
• scissors • pencils
• crayons or markers
• glue

What to Do:

1. Begin by holding up a heart cut from green paper. Ask: *"What shape is this?"*
2. Fold the heart in half lengthwise.
3. Draw (or trace) another half-heart shape on a folded sheet of green paper. Say: *"Half a heart looks like an ear. Place the part of the ear that fits next to the head on the paper's fold."* (Diagram A)
4. Cut around the drawn outline and unfold it. (Diagram B)
5. Tell children that each of them will need three hearts, and they do not need to be the same or perfect (particularly if they are drawing instead of tracing the half-heart). (Diagram C)

(If your children are not yet ready to draw hearts freehand, give the directions in the same sequence, but give each child a pattern and help him trace around each heart, then cut it out.)

6. Arrange your hearts in a shamrock shape on a white piece of construction paper (or on a paper plate if the hearts are small enough to fit). Glue the heart leaves in place. (Diagram D)
7. Give each child markers or crayons, and help him draw a stem for his shamrock.

To expand the activity, encourage each child to draw, then cut or tear out head, hat, and arm shapes from different colors of paper scraps. Add more details and features with markers and glue the leprechauns to the center of the shamrocks. (You might glue the head slightly below the top heart, and extend one arm to each side heart).

ST. PATRICK'S DAY FUN

LEPRECHAUN COOKING

Cooking activities combine listening and following direction skills with culinary skills and good appetites.

- Use thawed frozen bread dough to make **rainbow bread.** Divide the soft thawed dough into four portions. Use plastic gloves to knead several shades of food coloring into each portion. (The gloves will prevent your having rainbow-colored hands.) Give each child a portion of colored dough (it will not color their hands once the coloring is kneaded in), and ask them to roll it into a ball. Put all of the colored balls into a greased bread pan, or form the balls into a rainbow shape on a greased cookie sheet. Let the dough rise; then bake it as directed in a moderate oven. (You can mix up the dough from scratch. Mixing in coloring is easier then, because you can just add the coloring to the liquid called for in the recipe.)
- Use green gelatin to make **Green Wigglers.** Follow the directions on the box for finger Jello, and pour onto a cookie sheet to set. Use cookie cutters to cut out St. Patrick's shapes, or cut into diamonds or rectangles. Serve with crackers and green colored apple juice.
- Cut up and serve a plate of as many **green veggies** as you can find. Compare the differences in appearance, texture, and taste by presenting your children with an assortment including broccoli, cabbage, cucumbers, parsley, lettuce, green beans, and peas.
- If possible, go on a field trip to a grocery store. When you return to the center, list all of the green foods you have seen there.

STORYTELLING

Use exciting story times to increase skills in listening. Ask a child to retell a story, or ask open-ended questions about a story or book. Encourage the children to become storytellers by finishing stories or creating new endings for familiar stories.

- **Begin a round-the-circle leprechaun story.** Use a bean bag you've made from green material and filled with beans or rice as a prop for this story. Simply cut out two round shapes, stitch partly around. Loosely fill, and stitch tightly. If you like, turn the beanbag into a face by gluing on felt features. Begin a simple story by saying something such as, *"Once upon a time there was a leprechaun. He lived in a ..."* Toss the beanbag to another child. He finishes that sentence, then starts another and tosses the beanbag to another child. This activity takes practice, but children love it and can weave some rather wonderful stories. You may want to record some of the stories!
- **Write a class story.** At the top of an Experience chart, write IF I WERE GREEN, I WOULD BE." Begin like this, *"If I were green, I'd be a head of cabbage. What would you be? Would you be a frog, or a tree, or a green bean?"* Write children's ideas on the chart and then help them illustrate the chart.

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GREEN SCIENCE There are many ways to bring spring greenery in your classroom. Here are three:

GROW GRASS ON A SPONGE.

Cut flat sponges into simple shamrock shapes. Give children sponges and help them soak the sponges in water. Sprinkle a generous layer of grass seed on one side of each sponge. Keep the sponges damp and in a sunny window. You could also use a shape cut from terry cloth. Place the cloth in pie tins, water, and plant sprouts. Be sure to keep them moist.

MAKE A POTATO HEAD GARDEN.

Cut old nylons into lengths the size of white baking potatoes. Slip the nylon tubes over the potatoes. Attach features with glue, using rolling eyes, a gathered stuffed nose, and red paper mouth. Hollow the top of the potato to a depth of an inch or so, put a water saturated cotton ball in the bottom of the hole, then fill the hole with potting soil and plant with grass. Do this about five to nine days before St. Patrick's Day. Keep the top of the leprechaun damp and when his hair begins to grow, give him a green ribbon tie and celebrate his beauty!

MAKE MILK CARTON LEPRECHAUNS.

Collect individual-sized milk cartons from lunch or snacks and cut off the tops. About a week or so before St. Patrick's Day, line the bottom of each milk carton with a layer of small pebbles. Add 1/4 cup of sand or cat litter. Fill to the top with potting soil and plant grass seed. Water regularly and place near a window. After planting, attach a label (a strip of paper the height of the cut-off carton) decorated with a leprechaun each child has drawn and the child's name. In no time, each leprechaun will need a hair cut.

DO AN EXPERIMENT WITH CELERY.

Place stalks of celery in a pint jar half filled with green water. Record the time it takes for the green coloring to rise through the celery stalk. Create variables by using different lengths of celery.

GO ON A LEPRECHAUN HUNT

(an adaptation of the Bear Hunt)

Ask children to listen closely and follow the directions. Instruct them to clap the rhythm or slap their knees as you tell the story.

Going on a leprechaun hunt. I'm not afraid.
Let's go! Oh, look!
I see a grassy field. Can't go around it. Can't go under it. Can't go over it. Let's go through it.
Let's go! Swish, swish, swish, swish.
Oh, look! I see a giant tree.
Can't go over it. Can't go under it. Can't go through it. Let's climb it.
Let's go! Climb, climb, climb.
Oh, look! I see a river.
Can't go over it. Can't go under it. Can't go around it. Let's swim it.
Let's go. Swim, swim, swim.
Oh, look! I see a dark cave.
Can't go around it. Can't go under it. Can't go over it. Let's tiptoe into it.
Let's go. Tippy, tippy, toe.
It's really dark in here. Better turn on my flashlight.
Oh, no. I see something!
It's mean! It's green! It's a leprechaun! Let's go!
Run! Run! Swim! Swim! Climb! Climb! Swish! Swish!
Whew ... safe at home again.
(Embellish this story with details, or shorten it as time and interest allows.)

CIRCLE ROUND

by Susan M. Root

Do you want to help your children grow in social skills, develop some musical knowledge, and listen and follow directions? Circle games provide the perfect opportunity to help children develop in all these ways. Circle games provide action-oriented learning perfect for even the wiggliest child, and coordinating singing and actions with a group can help children feel very positive because everyone's participation influences the outcome of the game.

Many circle games require no props. "Farmer in the Dell," "Bluebird, Bluebird, Through my Window," and the "Old Brass Wagon" are just a few of the traditional games that have been handed down for generations.

IN THE FLOWER GARDEN

We have changed the words to "Farmer in the Dell" and added child-made props to make a circle game that can be used throughout the seasons or with themes that you use. To begin the "Flower Garden Song," have children draw flowers on small paper plates or cut and glue flowers from seed catalogs. Punch holes and use yarn or ribbon so these flowers can hang around children's necks.

To begin the game, place flowers around half of the children's necks and have them stand in the "garden" off to one side. The rest of the children stand in a circle and move around while singing:

We see a flower garden,
We see a flower garden.
Ho! Ho! It's springtime!
We see a flower garden.

Then choose one child from the circle to go and "pick" a flower from the garden while singing:

She'll pick a little flower,
she'll pick a little flower
Ho! Ho! It's springtime!
She'll pick a little flower.

Now the child and the "flower" that was picked join back into the circle and the group circles round singing the chorus. Another child chooses another "flower" and the game continues until the garden has been picked. Children can then exchange places so that every one has a turn in the "garden."

This circle game can be adapted for almost any theme or for seasonal activities. Just use your imagination to think about the words and also about how children can make the props for the song. Here are some suggestions:

We're all going shopping.
We're all going shopping.
Ho! Ho! It's shopping time.
We're all going shopping.
We'll pick delicious fruit...or
chicken and ham...or a
dozen eggs...

We're going to the
beach. It's summertime.
We'll pack our sunglasses,
(beach towel, sunscreen)...
We see a box of
crayons...It's drawing time.
She'll pick a red (green,
yellow) crayon...

Now that you have the idea and you've added some of your own, it's time for a variation on the game. In this movement activity, all of the children wear a prop around their necks. While the music is playing, they move around in a circle or around the space in your room. When the music stops, the children must sort themselves into groups. Each group could be indicated by a carpet square and a picture. So, in the Apple Orchard, children would stand together by the type of apple they are wearing. In the Shopping Game, children could be sorted by food groups. In the Crayon Game, all children wearing the same color would stand together.

Children will be interacting with each other and developing listening, singing, and movement skills as they "circle round" all year long.

GAME-A-MONTH

by Gail P. Jones

Name one thing that you can do on a rainy day, that teaches a multitude of skills, is fun for all, restores calm to the classroom and sanity to the teacher . . . if you answered "GAMES," you're absolutely correct! Not only are games all of the above, but they are also a great way to handle a waiting period, transitions, and an opportunity for physical movement and fitness. Skills such as focusing, listening, concentrating, problem solving, and paying attention are best learned through games.

Having a game ready for every month of the year on a chart or file card can help you in all kinds of situations! Remember to review the rules and set up prior to playing every time so that all goes smoothly!

◆ **March** includes St. Patrick's Day. So why not have a Shamrock Hunt, much like an Easter Egg Hunt? If you write a number or draw a shape on each shamrock, pre-schoolers can put them in order or play matching games with them.

◆ **April** is a good time to play "basketball" to remind children to clean up the environment. It can be used spontaneously in the classroom at the end of center time by assigning groups of children to specific areas with small trash baskets available and counting the amount each group collects. Or make it an outside playground game if plastic gloves can be used for safety.

◆ **May** means warm weather and dandelions! Why not have a dandelion picking and counting game with the culminating activity being making dandelion chains and crowns. (You will need to cut the slits in the stems near the flower head for weaving unless children are old enough to use plastic serrated knives.) No one will mind if their dandelions are picked!

◆ **June** is a great time to be outside and have a spring scavenger hunt with small groups trying to find such things as something that is green, sprouting a bird, wildflower, etc. Make a variety of sheets for different things to look for on different days. One day might be opposites such as something hard, something soft, etc. or you might challenge children to find something of each color in the rainbow!

◆ **July** brings hot weather so this would be a good time for water balloon games to cool off! Let children play tossing games, gentle rolling games, and predictions games such as "How much water will this balloon hold?"

◆ **August** is another month for cooling off after a day in the sun. Why not plan a watermelon Olympics with children using such things as weight guessing games, seed counting, eating contests, and watermelon rolling on a grassy maze!

◆ **September** usually means a new class with new friends and teachers. A great way to get to know more about each other is the Getting to Know You beach ball game. Take an inflated beach ball and mark off approximately three sections in each color band with a permanent marker. Write questions in each section such as, "What's your address?", "What's your favorite hobby?", etc. The game begins in a circle as you call a name and toss the "less-than-fully-inflated" ball to the person called. After you read the question under the right hand of the catcher, she answers the question and calls another name to whom she throws the ball. After repeated uses, children begin to know the question under their hand.

◆ **October** is a good time for Cat and Mice, a group game. Divide the group into mice and cats each at their respective ends of a playing area. Instructions for safety include: touching gently to tag, only crawling is allowed and mice should squeak instead of screaming when being chased by the cats. The mice are considered safe when they

crawl over a taped or imaginary line on the floor near their 'home.' Pretend to feed the cats some nice warm milk and let them wash their whiskers as they settle down for a nap. Once all cat eyes are closed (and they are not to open them until they hear scratching on the rug), sing together "*The old gray cats are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping. The old gray cats are sleeping in their house.*" Then whisper to the mice that there are little crumbs on the floor near the cats and they can crawl up very quietly when the song tells them they are creeping. When they get there they are to scratch the rug and crawl back squeaking to their safe area. Sing softly, "*The little mice are creeping, creeping, creeping. The little mice are creeping in the house.*" As soon as the cats hear the scratching, you say, "Yikes! *The cats are coming!*" Then the cats can crawl and meow and try to tag gently a mouse before they get home. They can be switched half way through the game so all get a chance to pursue and be chased.

◆ **November** is a great time for learning some early American and Native American games. Children can play Hopscotch, London Bridges, or rolling hoops like the Pilgrim children or making a toss the ring on a stick or the peach pit game that Native American children played. Clean and dry six peach pits. Paint one side white and the other side black. The players toss the basket gently and get a point for each peach pit that is black on top. This is a fun way to learn to record with five slashes crossed with the fifth when counting. Again, you don't have to have winners and losers, just let children count each toss and record it.

◆ **December** is the time to open a pretend toy shop with each child pretending to be their favorite toy that comes to life every night when the shopkeeper (you, the teacher) leaves the store. Play music and then tell children to dance around and then freeze when the music stops. The shopkeeper returns to be shocked at how the toys have been moved. Children squeal with delight as the shopkeeper says things such as, "*I know that doll was over here when I left!*"

◆ **January's** game could well be 'the Freeze' too, but another fun game is an indoor snowball fight with programmed snowballs! Be sure to tell children how real snowballs can hurt but that paper snowballs won't. Let them make the snowballs out of newspaper or tissue paper on which are written actions, questions, or simply things to identify such as letters and numbers. Line up two groups on either side of the room with their supply of 'snowballs.' Taking turns each child gets to throw their 'snowball' at some one on the other side. The child hit by the ball opens it up to see the instruction or letter to identify. If it's an action such as 'hopping five times on one foot,' all can try to do it.

◆ **February's** game can be a large laminated heart, divided into sections with a name in each. Put a spinner in the middle and let each take a turn spinning the spinner and hugging the person whose name is read. Continue until all have been hugged and had a turn. Older children might say why they 'love' that friend.

Whatever games you choose to use, children will not be wasting time playing . . . they will be learning while having fun. . . and so will you!

DANCING GAMES

by Karin-Leigh Spicer and Beth Spicer Jack

Dancing is one experience children can participate in that reaches across all cultures. It combines music and movement, two activities most young learners love. Dance reinforces listening and social skills children have been learning throughout the year. Dance allows children to be expressive and nurtures creativity.

Dance takes practice. Children must listen closely to the music to stay in step with the rhythm. They can start by listening to the music and tapping their thighs with their hands or clapping their hands to the beat. Young learners can also skip or hop to the music's rhythm. Square dancing is one example of a dance that reinforces good listening skills. Children must listen carefully to the caller while the music is playing to participate in the dance. Square dancing's movements can also be simplified making it easier for children to master.

Once children can listen to music and keep a steady beat, let them create their own dances. They can select their own music and create their own movements. If they want, they can use streamers, canes, or hats. How does their music sound? Happy or sad? What types of movements are happy? Which are sad? How many different movements can children come up with? Invite parents to a party and have their children teach them their own dances. Children can also work with their parents from the beginning and create their own "family" dance reflecting its personality.

Dance can teach children about ethnic traditions. Young learners can celebrate Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or St. Patrick's Day by dancing. When possible, involve parents or a member of the community to demonstrate an ethnic dance. The dancer can explain the history of the dance and why it's important to the holiday. Have children watch the dance and then try it. Because younger learners are not as coordinated as adults, teach them a few simple movements or let them simply hop along to the rhythms of the music. Dance should be a joyous celebration.

Dance gives young learners the opportunity to practice their social skills. For example, show children the ballroom scene from *My Fair Lady* or *The Sound of Music*. (Both videos can usually be found at the public library.) Then teach them how to waltz (i.e. bow and curtsy, dancing with partners picked at random).

Towards the end of the school year, have a "ball." Children as well as teachers can dress up. Cake and punch can be served. Children can practice their social skills such as taking turns, saying "*Please*" and "*Thank you*," and not eating until everyone has been served.

6A

MUSICAL GAMES

by Margery Kranyik

Let's play a musical game. All you need is a favorite tune to help shake out the itchies and stretch on a stormy day.

♪ Read *There Were Ten in a Bed* illustrated by Pam Adams (Child's Play). Have children sing the song using body motions to indicate numbers and "roll over." For variation, have children lie down on the floor and act out the words, rolling over and falling out until there is one left. Only six children in your group? Have "Six in the Bed."

♪ Change "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" to "Old MacDonald Had a Band." The "instruments" will be body parts. *"Old MacDonald had a band, E-I-E-I-O... And in his band he had some hands...with a clap, clap, here..."* Add other body parts such as eyes/blink, mouth/smack (popping lips), feet/stamp, fingers/snap, head/nod. Old MacDonald could have instruments as well. Try having drums, shakers, rhythm sticks, bells, and other instruments in the band.

♪ If possible, assemble a collection of scarves such as the one found in *Color Dance* by Ann Jonas (Greenwillow). Read the story and have children wave scarves as you read the color names. Follow up with a Dance of the Colors using your favorite instrumental music as background. Check your local fabric store for material for scarves and ask parents to help trim them to size.

♪ Using the tune for "Mary Had a Little Lamb," try the following lyrics:

If you are wearing something red,
Something red, something red.
If you are wearing something red,
Stand and wave to us.

Continue adding colors so that all children have a chance to stand.

♪ Try a variation on the "Hokey Pokey" using colors and numbers. Give each child a card with colored dots or use colored construction paper. Change words to: *"Put the red cards in; take the red cards out. Put the red cards in..."* Reinforce number knowledge by using number cards: *"Put the number 5's in; take the number 5's out,"* and so on.

♪ Play Drum Freeze. Tap out fast, slow, and normal patterns on the drum. Have children move until the drum stops and then "freeze" until the new drum pattern starts. Use a variation in drum sounds. Encourage children to move high and low. As you tap the drum head, have children move low to the ground. When you tap the rim of the drum, they walk high or tall. Introduce *crawl* and *hop* and *forward* and *backward*.

♪ Use a variation on "If You're Happy and You Know It" with instruments. *"If you're happy and you know it, play your drum(s)...shakers, bells, sticks."* Make a parade around your school or outdoors on a good day.

♪ Take a look through some of your old favorite songs and movement activities. Many will lend themselves to adaptation into something new and exciting, either with movements or props. Ask for children's help!

MOVIN' AND GROOVIN'

by Barbara F. Backer

Young children are born to move! They scoot and scat, creep and crawl, totter and toddle, step and stalk, jump and jiggle. They run, and they seldom rest.

All children have various learning styles. Some learn better through their ears (listening), some through their eyes (seeing how things work), some through their bodies (moving or doing), and some through talking about what they are doing. Active musical games integrate all of these learning styles, making learning accessible to every child in the group.

SIMPLE BEGINNINGS

Through acting out simple finger games such as "Eency-weency Spider," children learn concepts like *up* and *down*. They develop language playing "Ring Around-the-Rosie" and also build coordination and stronger muscles while they repeatedly fall down and get up to start over.

BALANCE AND COORDINATION

Young children build balance and coordination when they engage in a favorite activity—being joggled on an adult's foot or knee. With your children, make up a simple tune to the rhyme below, then sing it as you play the game.

Cross your knees and settle a toddler or older pre-schooler on your top foot. Hold hands very tightly to help the child balance, and bounce your foot appropriately as you recite this adapted, traditional nursery rhyme:

This is the way the ladies ride.
Walk, walk, walk. (Bounce foot gently.)
This is the way the gentlemen ride.
Trot trot trot. (Bounce foot slightly more.)
This is the way the children ride.
Gallopy-trot, gallopy-trot.
Gallopy, gallopy, gallopy, gallopy.
All fall off. (Bounce foot more and more, then capture the child in your arms as she "falls" off.)

BASIC CONCEPTS

You can create learning center activities that incorporate music and movement. String a length of bulky yarn between two chairs. Write the numbers 1 through 10 on ten, wooden, spring-type clothespins. Cut out ten shirt shapes and number them 1 through 10. Help children learn the song that follows. Then encourage a child

to sing the song as he works on the activity, hanging up shirt 1 on clothespin 1, shirt 2 on clothespin 2, and so on. Children can work in pairs and take turns hanging up the shirts. They'll be matching numerals, using small muscles, strengthening hand-eye coordination, and practicing social skills while they play. (Tune: "Mulberry Bush")

This is the way I wash my shirts,
Wash my shirts, wash my shirts.
This is the way I wash my shirts,
And hang them up on the clothesline.

First I wash shirt number one,
Number one, number one.
First I wash shirt number one,
And hang it up on the clothesline.

Put the emphasis on shapes by having children use unit blocks to outline large, empty shapes on the floor. Have these spread out in the room. Now sing the song below and have children follow the directions. Let children take turns making up and singing new directions. (Tune: "Ten Little Indians")

If you're wearing red, go stand in the circle.
If you're wearing red, go stand in the circle.
Stand in the circle now.

Other possible verses:
- *If you're wearing yellow, sit in the triangle...*
- *If you're wearing a belt, hop to the square...*
- *If you're wearing a head band, crawl around the circle...*

LISTENING SKILLS

Almost every teacher has said, *"If only they would listen!"* This musical game emphasizes listening skills and helps children refine balancing skills as well.

Play some music and have children move around the room as long as they hear the music playing. When the music stops, have them stop and "freeze."

Now have each child select a small block or piece of DUPLO to balance on their head as they move around the room and freeze. Each time the music stops, a child suggests a new place to balance the block—shoulder, elbow, knee, etc.

For more challenge, each day that you play this game, use different music. Moving to a classical lullaby is much easier than moving to Stravinsky's *"Rite of Spring."* Balancing while moving to a honky-tonk country tune or to a raucous rock and roll song requires different skills than those needed for a gentle ballad. Encourage children to request musical selections, too.

THINKING SKILLS

Recent brain research indicates that children who listen to music have stronger thinking skills. There is evidence that listening to Mozart increases people's math ability and their spatial understanding.

Why not have children explore space while moving to music? Play any kind of music (Don't avoid the classics), and have children move in ways the music suggests. Encourage them to come up with their own movements and not to copy others. Offer specific feedback to those who are moving differently from others. *"Monica is moving her arms back and forth."* Over time, children will become more creative in their movements. Their problem solving skills will increase as they learn to move without getting in the way of others.

Moving to music does more than help children learn. It also makes life more enjoyable. So, sing a song. Recite a rhyme. Turn on some music.

GROW WITH DRAMATIC PLAY

by Louise Thistle

Drama is action. Children love action. An *enjoyable* way to understand a story and its language fully is to dramatize it using the *Narrative Mime/Chant method*.

Narrative Mime/Chant involves doing an action while chanting it or another key word for each sentence in a story. This completely involves children in the characters, action, and language throughout a story. Children play both characters and inanimate objects. They also vocalize animal sounds and sound effects.

To do *Narrative Mime/Chant*, a narrator, often the teacher, tells the story while children do the actions and chant the key words along with her.

For example, using the Aesop Fable, "The Lion and the Mouse," a *Narrative Mime/Chant* version might begin, "*Once a golden lion came pawing along—paw, paw, paw, paw. He saw a shimmering lake——shimmer, shimmer, shimmer, shimmer. He licked the cool water with his rough tongue——lick, lick, lick, lick.*"

To act out this story, the children and teacher as the actors first paw like the big cat chanting, "*Paw, paw, paw, paw.*" Next they become the lake shimmering with their bodies and chanting, "*Shimmer, shimmer, shimmer, shimmer.*" Then they lick the water while chanting, "*Lick, lick, lick, lick.*"

Everyone, even shy children, can participate using this method of total body involvement and exuberant vocal expression. Children naturally repeat words and sentences again and again. So this method naturally develops language. At the same time, children experience the characters and their actions throughout the story.

Stories need adaptation to make them *Narrative Mime/Chants*. The goal is to pare the story down to its essential action and to create an action and a word to chant for each sentence. If no action is implied, create an action using an adjective, noun, or sound effect word, and a gesture to go with it. Let children help you to choose actions and words to chant.

For example, "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" might begin, "*Once there were three bears. One was a big papa bear. The second was a middle-sized mother bear. The third was a little baby bear.*"

A *Narrative Mime/Chant* version might begin, "*Once there were three bears, bears, bears, bears. One was a big, big, big, big Papa bear. The second was a middle, middle, middle, middle-sized Mother bear. The third was a little, little, little, little Baby bear.*" The actors first make their bodies "bear-like" chanting, "*Bear, bear, bear, bear.*" Next they make themselves big and chant "*Big, big, big, big.*" And they would do the same for *middle-sized* and *little*.

Many children's picture books emphasize action and thus lend themselves to *Narrative Mime/Chants*. Some even repeat action words, have chant like songs and refrains, and have animal and sound effect words that are fun to act and chant.

Some good ones are Paul Galdone's *The Three Bears* and *The Gingerbread Man*, (Clarion) Verna Aardeema's *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in Peoples Ears* (Demco Media), *The Funny Little Woman* by Arlene Mosel (Dutton), and the Native American story, *The Great Ball Game* by Joseph Bruchac (Dial).

Literature dramatization is memorable. Children want to act out a story they've so vividly and personally experienced again and again. They feel a sense of accomplishment and exhilaration in playing these powerful universal character types. It is important to dramatize the best literature. You might begin with the classics

Excerpts from *Dramatizing the Lion and the Mouse* by Louise Thistle (Literature Dramatization Press)

As I visited classrooms as a consultant, teachers asked me to adapt some classics into Narrative Mime/Charts. So I wrote three Narrative Mime/Chart books—*Dramatizing the Little Red Hen, Dramatizing the Lion and the Mouse,* and *Dramatizing the Three Billy Goats Gruff* (Literature Dramatization Press). All three have English and Spanish Versions.

Each book has actions to do for each sentence in the story and an action picture showing the character or object engaged in the action. Each picture also has an action direction under it suggesting an action to do. Some of these books include simple repetitive action songs using traditional tunes.

Narrative Mime/Charts are ideal to use at family literacy events, open houses, PTA meetings, or other events where parents and children may participate together. The teacher, another adult, or older student might narrate and everyone else chants and acts out the story with her. The adults will enjoy becoming characters, experiencing their language, and dramatizing the story as much as the children. And, everyone's imagination will grow!

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IN THE BOOK CORNER

TAKE A LOOK — TAKE ANOTHER LOOK

by Sandra L. Malcolm

If we look around us at everyday objects, the whole world becomes a game. We can encourage children to take a close-up look at what they see to discover all of the hidden marvels.

An excellent way to introduce children to the practices of investigation is through the many picture books by Tana Hoban. Tana Hoban is a photographer who has created more than forty children's books by using her photographs to focus our attention on chosen concepts.

MORE THAN ONE

by Tana Hoban (Greenwillow Books)

BEFORE READING, ask, "Does anyone know what we call two shoes, two socks, or two mittens?" Have examples of pairs to show and discuss. Explain that a pair means two of something. Ask, "How many ways can we think of to say 'more than one'?" Show pictures of a herd of cattle, a flock of sheep, etc. Write each suggestion on chart paper.

AFTER READING, compare your list of ways to say more than one with Hoban's. Write each word as children recall from the story. Take another look at the pictures. Tell children that when we look closely, sometimes we see things we didn't see before. Do they see other things in the pictures that tell them more than one?

ACTIVITIES

- Have children recreate each of the collective nouns using familiar objects from the classroom.
- Have children draw pictures to represent more than one. Create a class book using the drawings.
- Provide a camera for children to take pictures representative of "more than one." Create a classroom wall mural matching the photos to the words.
- Take a "more than one" walk (walking to parks) finding examples of "more than one." Take a camera to photograph what is found.
- Have children talk with family members and others to find new ways to say more than one. Share what they find.

EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE

by Tana Hoban (Greenwillow Books)

BEFORE READING, talk about opposites. Present an example such as, "I like Joey *to stand and* Sammy is sitting; they are *doing opposite* things: standing and sitting." Have children think of other opposites. Tell them that Tana Hoban used her camera to show us examples of opposites.

AFTER READING, point out that the book didn't have any words. Ask children how they knew what was happening. Invite them to take a second look at the pictures. "Do you *think that* we will see things we missed *the first time* we looked at the pictures if we *take another* look?"

ACTIVITIES

- Make the book available for children to use independently to tell their own story. They will reinforce the concept of opposites as they interact with the book.
- Make word cards for children to sort and match to the opposites in the book.
- Make an interactive bulletin board where children can independently match opposites (use pictures and words) by connecting them from picture to picture.
- Have children draw pictures or take photographs of other opposites. Construct a class book using the drawings or photos.

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ALL ABOUT WHERE

by Tana Hoban (Greenwillow Books)

BEFORE READING: invite children to look around the room. Encourage them to find something with their eyes. Say: *"Tell us how we could find what you are seeing."* (It is beside the blocks. It is under the window, and so on). *"Think of words that tell us where something is."* Write the responses on chart paper.

AFTER READING: talk about what is happening in some of the pictures. How do children think they got the ship inside the bottle? Can children make up a story about the bicycle in the grass? These pictures are photographs. How are the photographs different from drawings?

ACTIVITIES

- Have children role play spatial relation words such as *under, over, above, beside, between,* etc.
- Sing the song "Going on a Bear Hunt" (Choose your favorite version of this song.) and do the motions for the "where" words.
- Set up an obstacle course in the classroom or on the playground. Be sure the course includes a variety of activities that involve spatial relations. Encourage children to say what they are doing at each obstacle. (*"I am going up the steps of the slide. I am going down the slide."*)
- Post a word list of opposites and spatial relation words in the writing center. Encourage children to write a story using the words to describe what is happening. Have children illustrate their story or photograph objects that are suggested in their story.
- Be detectives. Look at pictures in magazines very closely. Describe what you see using the new words learned in our Tana Hoban books.

JUST LOOK

by Tana Hoban (Greenwillow Books)

BEFORE READING: show children pictures of objects found in their daily lives. Ask them to just look at the pictures. Cover the picture and ask children to name everything they saw in the pictures. Write what they say. Take another look at the pictures, focusing their attention to details. What did they miss naming? Do they see more when they take another look?

After reading, ask: *"How were the two books alike?" "How were they different?" "What was special about the pictures in these books?" "Why do you think the author just gave us a tiny hole to look through to see the picture?" "How did looking through the small hole help us see details?"*

ACTIVITIES

- Have a scavenger hunt where teams of children are to look for items in the class (or on the playground). Each team of "detectives" is given a sheet with pictures or words of things to locate. Items can either be checked off or brought to a central location.
- Make a set of "holes" to place on top of pictures for children to make guesses about the covered picture. Begin with a small hole, then a larger one until finally the whole picture is exposed. Make these available for children to use in small groups or pairs.
- Provide a camera for children to take pictures of their favorite items (in the classroom, at home, or the playground). Develop the pictures and use them to create a class book. Insert "hole" pages between each photograph following the format of the books shared in class.
- Encourage children to make up stories to accompany each picture in the wordless picture books.

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STILL IN THE

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

by Paula Gaj Sitarz

Well-organized books abound full of creative ideas to stimulate the growth of pre-schoolers intellectually, behaviorally, socially, and physically.

CLASSIC TITLES

I *I Have a Purple Cow and 100 Other Recipes for Learning* by Ann Cole, Carolyn Haas, Faith Bushnell and Betty Weinberger (Little, Brown) is a classic resource of activities that will encourage children to observe, explore, discover, and imagine. Check out the sections devoted to "Learning Games" and "Word Games." You'll find activities that help children match objects, learn colors, numbers, and opposites, for example.

I In *Learning Through Play* by Joan Macrides and Janice Lloyd (Harper & Row), you'll find eleven chapters that cover eleven groups of skills children need to master. They include the senses, language development, counting and measuring, creativity, self-esteem, and physical growth. For each activity, the authors list the skills that are worked on, materials needed, and instructions on how to play the game. Especially fine are "Silly Sentences," in which each child adds words to create a zany story, "Games with Food Cards," and "What If," a game of cause and effect.

I *Games (And How to Play Them)* illustrated by Anne Rockwell (Thomas Y. Crowell) is a delightful book with instructions for forty-three games, many appropriate for pre-schoolers. There are indoor and outdoor games, quiet and active games. Children love "Coffee pot," a guessing game, "Giant Steps," "Button, Button," and "Have You Seen My Sheep?"

GROWTH OF THE ENTIRE CHILD

I *The Giant Encyclopedia of Theme Activities for Children 2 to 5: Over 600 Favorite Activities Created by Teachers for Teachers* (Gryphon House) is arranged by subject from Alphabet to Weather. Particularly useful are the sections The Body, Games, and Movement. For each activity you'll find a list of materials needed, step-by-step instructions and extension activities. In Movement, you'll find the games "Ball Kicking," "Can You Climb Like a Monkey?," "Make Imaginary Appearance," "Velcro Obstacle Course Lines," and "Kangaroo Tag," designed to enhance jumping skills. "Beanbag Toss" helps children practice following directions and eye-hand coordination and "Body Bingo" reinforces the names of body parts.

I *The Learning Circle: A Preschool Teacher's Guide to Circle Time* by Patty Claycomb (Gryphon House) is a very appealing and useful title. Check out the excellent section, Learning Circle Games, in which you'll find activities that teach concepts like "The Chickens and the Fox" (color), "Banker" (learning coins), "Sponge Eater" (numbers), and the clever game "Menu Munchers" (foods).

I In *Power Pak for Preschool Programs: Skills-Based Activity Units for the Entire Year* by Claudette Gecenski and Judith Meeker (Incentive Publications) you'll find twenty units with activities to develop the whole child: from language development, large and small motor development, and practical life skills to nature and science, visual and auditory discrimination, and social-personal growth. Among the fine games you'll want to try are the "Pretending" activity in the unit on Weather, "Number Hopscotch," and "Lunch Bag Mystery" (a memory game).

I Liz and Dick Wilmes have written several excellent titles published by Building Blocks. In *Everyday Circle Times*, you'll find sections of games on self-concept, basic concepts, and science, for example. Enjoy

"Parachute Play," "Obstacle Course," and "Follow the Leader," and "Texture Walk." For colors, you'll find "Yellow Riddle," "Spinner Fun," and "Passing Oranges."

In *Yearful of Circle Times*, the Wilmers have arranged their book by seasons and then by topics from Scarecrows and Birds to Hibernation and Magic Carpet. For each topic, you'll find original and useful language games and active games. The former will enhance children's language, cognitive, small muscle, and social skills. The latter are designed to strengthen children's physical skills. Try the language games "What Could It Be?," "Fly and Spy," and "Turtle or Frog." Active games children enjoy include "Pumpkin, Pumpkin," and "Wake Up Sleepy Heads."

SPECIFIC AREAS OF GROWTH

A unique and valuable title is *The Peaceful Classroom: 162 Easy Activities to Teach Preschoolers Compassion and Cooperation* by Charles A. Smith (Gryphon House). You'll find activities and games organized by skill and age for encouraging friendship, cooperation, consideration of others, helping, and respect. For each activity, Smith lists skills the game develops, materials needed, and step-by-step instructions. The games and activities are easy for children to do—purposeful, yet fun. You'll find excellent, well-thought-out activities and related picture books that reinforce skills taught in the games. Try "Mouse on the Run" (cooperation), "My Friend," "Tug of Peace," and "Jet Plane."

You'll find easy-to-prepare and execute games that require few materials in *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe: Math Activities for Young Children* by Sam Ed Brown (Gryphon House). Try "Banana Skins" to teach counting and one-to-one correspondence, "Beanbags Galore" and "Tossing Bear-Bags" to explore shapes, colors, and number names, "Obstacle Course" for sequencing, and "Egg Carton Fish" for numeral recognition.

Robert E. Rockwell, Robert A. Williams and Elizabeth A. Sherwood have created a collection of clear, easy, enjoyable, and useful games in *Every Body Has a Body: Science From Head to Toe: Activities Book for Teachers of Children Ages 3-6* (Gryphon House). In "Helping Hands," a child pretends that her hands are helping her to do something and the other children guess what the youngster is doing. "Wide World of Sports" is an activity in which a child pantomimes the arm movements used in a sport and the other youngsters guess the sport. Children enjoy "Find the Clock—Ear Detectives," in which they must use their sense of hearing to find a hidden alarm clock and "Simple Signs," in which children take turns being crossing guards to explore hand signals that stop people and traffic.

Jean Warren's *1, 2, 3 Games: No-Lose Group Games for Young Children* (Warren Publishing House) is a fine title with games to enhance children's movement, language and imagination skills. Among the great variety of activities are "Shopping Spree," "Switch, Switch, make a Wish," "Bowling," and "Animal Safari."

Margaret Carter understands what all the other authors in this article know. In her book *The Young Child's Busy Book of Playing, Learning Stories, and Rhymes* (Kingfisher Books), Carter also hopes children will learn through enjoyment. Numbers, letters, shapes, and colors are explored through games and creative activities. Have children "Prowl Like a Tiger," "All Jump UP," engage in "The Color Race," and enjoy "A Counting Game."

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

by Lisa L. Durkin

Spring is a time of change. Your children have been growing and changing, sometimes quite dramatically, throughout this year. As a result of this change, many of them will be leaving your classroom or program and moving on in June. As Sherry Burrell says in her article, *" At any age, change can be a difficult, anxiety-producing process. However, it can also be an exciting, challenging, fun process ... [especially] when change is seen as part of the normal processes of life."* In this issue of *First Teacher*, we help you make the upcoming changes exciting and enjoyable for your children, their parents, and for you.

Start with where children are—right in their own classroom. As Barbara Backer suggests in her article, simple activities with materials such as play dough or cooking projects help children observe changes firsthand. Another suggestion is to take photos of children at play for a week and then help them observe changes—in their clothing, activities, and how the classroom looks.

How is a pre-schooler like a butterfly? Susan Entz answers this question while describing an exciting learning unit that is perfect for spring. (A Both experience growth and change in relatively short time spans and both move on to new stages at this time of year.) Growth is such an important aspect of change for young children. The Life Cycle posters in her article help children focus on their own growth. And observing the dramatic transformations as caterpillars "grow" into butterflies is an excellent way to introduce the notion of change in nature.

Everywhere you look there are natural changes in the spring. Karen Stephens gives you the basics for nature walks and how to help children tune into the season with all of their senses. Then you'll learn how to create gardens with tiers—inside and out. Use the activity on page 18 to help children observe root systems, that important part of the garden you don't normally see.

Another way to make change fun and exciting is to celebrate it—not with a graduation ceremony (there will be plenty of those in the academic life of the child) but with a child centered event that can include the whole family. How about turning your class into "camp" for a day? Or planning a Mothers and Fathers fair that the whole family can enjoy?

We end this issue with a special 4-page section for parents to help them think of activities to do with their children during the summer. Let us know what you think of this new feature. Write to us at *First Teacher* ● 165 Orchard Ave. ● Weston MA 02193 or e-mail us at ftfc@world.std.com. It is our goal to support children, teachers, caregivers, and families!

Upcoming Themes:

JULY/AUGUST:
Beat the Heat

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER:
Learning Centers

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER:
Holiday Magic

PHOTO CREDIT

Karen Chen: cover

ART CREDITS

Debby Dieter: pages 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19 22, 25, 32, 33, 34, 35

Catherine Meier: pages 5, 10, 14, 15, 28, 29

Nora Weidler: pages 9, 26, 27, 30, 31

CHANGING TIMES

by Sherry Burrell

Change. At any age, change can be a difficult, anxiety-producing process. However, it can also be an exciting, challenging, fun process! When change is seen as part of the normal processes of life, teachers are more likely to create smooth "endings" for the children in their classes. When the time comes for children to "move on" to the next level in their educational program, it might mean that children will be leaving teachers and friends with whom they have spent many months or even years. When "end of the year" activities are too flamboyant, children can become overwhelmed and anxious. When the "ending" is not recognized at all, or is made too little of, children can become confused about what has happened to their "school"! The challenge is to create tactful, gentle, simple celebrations that recognize each child in a special way, to help everyone to comfortably say "good-bye." No matter when a child leaves a classroom, it is important to encourage and allow a short period of "transition," so that the child will have time to feel good about the experience, and feel comfortable with leaving it.

What sort of ceremony seems appropriate for young children who are ending one phase of their educational career, and will be moving on to the next? Have a "kid-oriented" party! Let children have some voice in whatever is planned. Feeling involved is an important part of feeling in control. Several short, low-key activities are much easier for children to handle than one huge, flamboyant ceremony that is really designed more for adults than for children. Whatever is planned, focus on the following types of experiences.

✿ Be sure that the "moving on" celebration includes something that gives children the opportunity to recall some wonderful moments in the past few months of play. Make a list of "things we've loved about being in this class." Enlist the services of an artistic parent, so that the list can become a visual pictorial list rather than a list of words.

✿ Encourage children to bring in a favorite person with whom the child could show off art work, serve a cooking project, or teach favorite fingerplays.

✿ A celebration might be set up so that parents and children do favorite activities together (for the last time).

✿ The "circle time" activities during the final week could include recognizing how special and unique each child has been to the class, and would not only allow each child to be the "center of attention," but would also teach each child to think of how each of their friends is also a special person.

✿ Children might be invited to share sad feelings about leaving as well as happy feelings. It is important that children know that a wide range of feelings is normal, and that feeling sad, excited, angry, and happy all at the same time, is okay.

✿ Talk with children about "endings." Have them suggest things that have endings (such as stories, movies, parties, etc.) Encourage them to view the ending of this year's school experience as normal and natural. It means that it is time to start something new! Have children think about new stories, new movies, new parties, etc.

Moving on is both an ending and a beginning. Bringing "closure" to this year's classroom experience means that the children will be helped to move on to new experiences with positive feelings.

LET'S FOCUS ON CHANGE

by Barbara F. Backer

Changes are all around us. Day turns into evening, darkness becomes daylight. Trees bud, then grow leaves, the leaves change colors and fall from the trees. Seeds burst into sprouts that grow into plants. Those plants, in turn, produce more seeds. Friends move away; new friends enter our group. Noticing changes, observing them, and predicting when they will occur is an important science skill. We help children develop this skill when we focus on change in our classrooms.

Begin with modeling dough. This changes again and again as children use it. Help them focus on the changes. Help them talk about what they are making and how they are using the dough.

After they've done this for a few days, give each child a piece of paper and a pencil. Show children how to make a tally mark on the paper each time they use the dough in a different way—rolling it into a snake form, curling it into a cup, molding it into an animal, rolling balls for a snowman. Challenge older children to draw pictures of the ways they used the dough and the changes they produced. Discuss the results.

Children are fascinated by color changes. Build on this interest by giving each child a zip-locking bag containing small amounts of red, yellow, and blue modeling dough. Be sure each bag is closed. Encourage children to manipulate the bagged dough by squeezing the bag. What happens? Children will observe that the doughs change color as they mix together.

Now give each child a zip-locking bag of red, yellow, and blue DUPLO. Have them shake the bags and squeeze them. Do the DUPLO colors change? Encourage discussion.

On another day, put drops of two colors of paint in each child's zippered bag. Use different colors in different bags. Have children manipulate the bags. What happens to the paint? Encourage children to compare their results.

Help your young ones notice changes in temperature. Have children feel a thick pot holder. Now place a hot tea kettle on the holder and leave it a few minutes. Remove the kettle to a safe place and pass the holder from child to child. (Feel it first to be sure it is warm and not hot enough to burn anyone.) What change do they notice?

Now place a bowl of ice on top of the warmed holder for a few minutes. Have children predict what will happen. Let them feel the holder again. What do they notice? Were their predictions accurate? Did the ice change?

Let your children notice the changes that occur in cooking. Help them make pretzels from scratch. Notice how the ingredients change when you mix them together and how the dough

changes shape as you knead it and roll it into pretzel shapes. Discuss how the yeast causes the dough to get larger and how the oven's heat continues this process. Discuss the changes in the soft, raw dough and the crunchy, cooked pretzels. Encourage children to draw pictures of the experience and dictate comments for you to write on their drawings.

Instant photos provide a great way of documenting changes that occur in the classroom. Take a picture of the room before children arrive, and others during Circle Time, Center activities, Music and Movement, Clean-Up Time, and other times during the day. Display these and discuss the changes your group sees in them.

Take pictures of children when they are "dressing up" in the Dramatic Play area. Compare these with pictures of the same friends in their school clothes. What's the same? What's different? Ask your group if their friends changed when they put on other clothes. Now ask the children who dressed up. Their answers may surprise you.

The Block Area changes from minute to minute during center activities. Take a picture of this area every five minutes during all of center time on one day. Number the pictures on the back as each exits your camera. See if children can put them in the correct order. Who does a better job of this, the children who played in the Block Area or the other children? Discuss the results.

Taking children's pictures every day for a week allows them to see changes in clothing. Sometimes that clothing will indicate changes in the weather. Look at classroom photos taken over several months and observe clothing changes over time.

Take photos of children painting at the easel. Again, see if your group can arrange these photos in order. Take a series of photos of one child as he hangs paper on the easel, begins his painting, continues painting, and finishes the creation. Show the group only the first two pictures. Can they predict what he will paint? Show the next picture. Are their guesses more refined? Show the final picture, or let him show his finished painting so children can check their predictions.

Once you help your class focus on changes, they'll begin pointing them out to each other and to you. Ask questions to help them understand why the changes occur and help them predict future changes. The biggest change that you will notice will be your young scientists' powers of observation.

PRETZELS AND CREATIVE TWISTS

You'll Need: 1 1/2 cups warm water ● 1 envelope yeast ● 4 cups flour ● pastry brush ● 1 tsp. salt ● bowls ● 1 Tb. OF sugar ● coarse salt ● mixing fork and spoon

What to Do:

1. Mix together warm water, yeast, sugar. Set aside for five minutes.
2. Put salt and flour in a bowl.
3. Add yeast mixture. Mix together to form a dough.
4. Shape dough into creative twists.
5. Beat one egg and brush onto twists. Sprinkle on coarse salt.
6. Bake at 400°F for 12 minutes.

from Concept Cookery by Kathy Faggella (First Teacher Press)

HOW IS A CHILD LIKE A BUTTERFLY?

by Susan Entz

Saying good-bye at the end of the school year is always difficult for teachers, parents, and children alike. Rather than letting it take you by surprise, prepare for this inevitable transition through a unit on change.

Plan the last unit of the year to explore an observable natural phenomena—metamorphosis of a butterfly or a frog, growth of an apple, blossoming of a flower.

Emphasize the physical changes throughout the unit and draw a parallel to the child's physical growth. Note that change is natural and inevitable. A child's shoes grow too tight and pants get too short, a butterfly's chrysalis becomes too confining and a germinated seed can no longer stay in its safe shell.

SAMPLE UNIT:
Butterflies and Children Grow and Change

Prepare for this unit by informing parents that you plan to use the study of butterflies as a way to prepare for an end-of-the-year transition. Ask for cooperation, especially with locating needed photographs of children as infants.

If weather permits, locate plants in the neighborhood that have butterfly eggs. Have children notice the tiny specks that will grow into a beautiful butterfly. In class, read about the development of a butterfly in non-fiction storybooks. Have each child form a little "egg" by rolling a small piece of cotton into a ball and gluing it onto a twig, mounted on a piece of construction paper.

Ask parents to send in pictures of the mother when she was pregnant with this child. Children can share their pictures with the class. Make color copies of these photographs to begin a life cycle poster for each child.

CATERPILLARS

Remind the neighborhood hunt to look for caterpillars. Take magnifying glasses so children can get a good view of both eggs and the caterpillars that crawl on the plant and eat the leaves.

In class, provide a variety of colorful, chenille wires. Encourage children to shape the wires into small caterpillars. Attach them to a "caterpillar tree" in the room.

Have each child bring in one of their baby pictures. Make color copies of the originals, adding them to the life cycle poster.

CHRYSALIDES

Remind the hunt one more time. This time look for some of the caterpillars that have entered their dormant state. Show children a chrysalis and encourage them to find others.

Find some branches with eggs, caterpillars, and chrysalides already formed. Snip it to bring back to class. Have children check the chrysalides throughout the day. (See page 10.)

In class, have children remove one of their handmade caterpillars from the caterpillar tree. Place it gently into the toe of a discarded nylon stocking. Use twist ties to refer this chrysalis to the caterpillar tree.

Note that just as the caterpillar has changed, so have the children in your class. Show them pictures of themselves from the beginning of the school year. Place each picture on the child's life cycle poster.

BUTTERFLIES

Watch the chrysalides carefully. Have children draw pictures or use watercolors on butterfly-shaped paper at the easel to create their own ideas about what their insects will look like when they emerge.

When the big day occurs, take pictures of the newly emerged butterflies as they dry their wings and then take flight.

Take pictures of the insects to

be "graduated" children. Add these last pictures to the life cycle posters.

Talk about how much children have grown and changed, just like their friends, the butterflies. And just like the butterflies, it is time for them to try their wings and fly off to new adventures and a new school.

FAREWELL CEREMONY

A ceremony marks important transitions, sometimes from one phase of life to another. Plan a get-together with parents to note this important transition for both parents and children.

Carry your theme through the final ceremony, using a butterfly motif.

In your concluding remarks, note that just as the butterfly takes flight, an apple drops from the tree when it is ripe, a baby bird has to fly away from the nest, or a tadpole turns into a frog and hops off to new adventures in the pond, it is time for the children to "move on to a new adventure." Have a certificate noting the completion of this phase of their lives. Now they are "big kids" ready to go to Kindergarten.

RESOURCES

■ *Life of the Butterfly* by Heidenrow and Andreas Fabre-Nagel (Carolrhoda Books)

Beautiful photographs document the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly.

■ *Monarch Butterflies. Mysterious Travelers* By Illana Lanes (Alfred A. Knopf). A photographic diary tracing the butterfly's life from caterpillar to butterfly, migrating south for the winter.

■ *Butterfly and Moth* by Paul Whalley (Alfred A. Knopf). This Eyewitness Book details moths and butterflies through various life stages. An excellent reference.

■ *The Butterfly* by Maria M. Mudd. (Steward, Tabori and Chang). Fully illustrated 3-D color illustrations pop up to bring the life cycle of the butterfly alive.

RAISING BUTTERFLIES

You'll need:

- a jar of water
- a large cardboard box
- clothespin
- tape
- scissors
- plastic wrap
- crayon

1. If you and the children spot a caterpillar on a plant, take both the plant and the caterpillar back to school.

2. Cut an opening in a box and cover it with cheesecloth. Tape, staple or use a rubber band to hold cheesecloth in place.

3. Place a jar of water along with the plant and caterpillar into box. Prepare crawl around plant to keep it upright. Close the lid of the box.

4. Let the children watch the development of a butterfly. When the adult emerges from its chrysalis, wait a day or two for its wings to dry and then release it.

Taken from Explore and Experiment by Joanne Pino (First Teacher Press)

CREATE A BUTTERFLY GARDEN

by Margery A. Kranyik

"Look," says Mark, as he points to the butterfly on a leaf. Everyone stops to look at the colorful creature flutter by. Butterflies are attention-getters for young children. You can help lure them to an outdoor area where they can be observed and enjoyed.

Start with a butterfly art project such as the clothespin butterfly above, that can be used as a puppet, hung as a mobile or attached for decoration on your wall or window.

Educational material stores such as *World of Science* have butterfly kits that can be set up in your classroom for children to observe metamorphosis close up or you can raise butterflies using the directions on the facing page. However, you can also plan your outdoor garden to include plants and flowers known to attract butterflies. If you see them in the area, you will usually be able to entice them to come close giving children opportunities to see butterflies in their natural habitat as leaves and nectar provide nutrients.

Check with your local greenhouse or nursery at planting time. Many of these plants are perennials that will return each year, and with care, will need to be planted only once to provide years of butterfly watching.

Here are some suggestions:

- **Butterfly Plant** provides larval food for Monarch butterfly
- **Purple Cone Flower**, daisy like blooms provide nectar
- **Spicebush** larval food plant for Spicebush/Swallowtail butterfly
- **Lantis**
- **Joe Pye Weed** grows in sunny, damp climate
- **Pentas** is tropical perennial for sunny environments
- **Zinnias**
- **Petunias**
- **Carrot** family plants

If you have a **Milkweed** on your property, you already have the foundation of a butterfly garden. The Monarch butterfly chews the leaves and lays eggs on the underside of the leaf.

Once you have established your garden and flowers are in bloom, take time to observe. When butterflies come, try taking pictures with an instant developing camera. Make a graph of the number and type that you observe each day. Make sure you have an identification book to help with new varieties that may show up in your garden.

After you have enjoyed nurturing butterflies in your own environment, use butterfly art projects as props and have children create a Dance of the Butterflies to Tchaikovsky's "Dance of Sugar Plum Fairies" in The Nutcracker Suite.

SPYING SIGNS OF SPRING

by Karen Stephens

Spring is the most life-affirming season of them all. Children's natural curiosity propels them full steam ahead into discovering all the treasures around them. They literally SPRING into spring. It is your job to guide young children's eyes (and ears!) so they can see all the marvel and enchantment spring has to offer.

BASICS FOR EXPLORING

Talk walks around your block regularly. Even in urban areas signs of spring abound.

- Carry magnifying glasses so children can use them on walks or during outdoor play. Some signs of spring are teeny!
- Carry bags or backpacks when enjoying the great out doors. Kids LOVE to collect specimens of spring—nature's treasures.
- Carry child-sized binoculars on walks. Some signs of spring are far away!
- From time to time, take a tape recorder on walks. Sounds of spring can be played during naptime or left for individual use in the listening center.
- Take a camera or video camera with you on some walks. Cameras help children focus on particulars, and they help children recall the experiences once back in the classroom.
- Ask parents to send a disposable camera to school with their child that would give each child the luxury of a whole roll of film with which to be a nature photographer!
- Provide bulletin board and table spaces so children can display signs of spring. On bulletin boards record seasons which are favorable for kids as spies during their explorations. Graphic organizing knowledge can be created. Children enjoy graphing daily temperature or rainfall amounts. Scrapbooks for "found items" are another possibility for documentation and organization of knowledge.

Use natural items to decorate the classroom, such as providing flowers for vases. Bird nests from LAST spring can make for a charming centerpiece. **Note:** Don't take this year's spring nests from bushes. They may be in use, and they may contain insects you don't want in the classroom!

SPYING SIGNS OF SPRING

- **Tune into Scents.** Breathe deeply and smell the earth as it warms. Let children dig in the dirt or plant flowers to get their fill of Mother Earth's springtime scents.

Find spring flowers, shrubs, and trees with scents: lilac, rose, lilac, rose, apples, rose, tulips after a pungent scent for the finely tuned nose. Grab apple trees after an an organic great perfume when flowering. And don't forget our most common plant—grass. It smells wonderful after its first mowing.

Walk with umbrellas in a light rain shower. The rain washing away winter's residue is a gift we can feel and watch as well as smell!

- **Tune into Patterns and Designs.** Patterns in our nature include delicate lace fronds unfurling, swarm leaves spiraling through warm streams, circular ripples in most puddles,

patterns of color in bird feathers, meandering trails left by earth worms crawling through fresh mud, flags and windsocks flapping in spring breezes, tunnels of rainwater weaving through driveways and yards on their way to street gutters, the V pattern of geese migrating in formation, spiders making webs in evergreens, competing for coloring of male and female birds of the same species. (There is often quite a difference!) and of course the loudest of all – a spring cardinal.

● **Tune into Textures.** Encourage children to gently touch soft bulbous spring buds, silky flower petals, moist new maple leaves, mushy and crawling out of winter's deep freeze, slippery mud in puddles, dandelion dropping off ground cover, and the crusty bark of barkbound trees. Be sure not to forget to let children feel spring breezes caressing their cheeks and rustling their hair!

● **Tune into Sounds.** Gather everyone to listen to: geese honking their return to thawed lakes, rain showers tapping their dance on the roof, thunder during storms, nesting birds singing their territorial and mating songs, baby birds begging for food.

Don't forget to listen for the buzz of insects after their spring hatching. And you'll sometimes hear less welcoming sounds: lawn mowers and snow spring time tornado warning sirens.

● **Tune into Wildlife Behavior.** You'll have the best chances of viewing wildlife if you provide them food, shelter, and water in your play yard. A bird feeder, birdbath, and brush for shelter strategically placed outside of a classroom window provide many a wildlife show. But of course, a walk in a wildlife friendly park will give you chances to view wildlife, too. Here's what to observe:

Watch migratory songbirds carry spring in your direction! Observe nesting rituals such as a male cardinal feeding the female. Spy robins searching for worms. Watch out a bird building a nest and observe its daily progress. (Even a conscientious observer can't keep up with eggs then babies! It's a great chance to observe a bird's lifespan development.

And there are other spring time bird antics to watch: male red headed woodpeckers put on a mock battle; aerial displays to woo competition for mates; Northern Parula search OUTSIDE branches in search of insects as evidence that the spruced cheering woodpeckers might have missed.

Note changes in several for it's instance, some animals lose white winter fur and acquire rusty or brown warm weather fur. If a camouflage is advised. And even some household pets will have a change in fur, type calls for shedding, or animal coats aren't too thick. It's nature's plan to prevent animals from becoming overheated!

Keep an eye peeled for some of nature's most endearing spring miracles: baby rabbits, raccoons, opossums, ducks, or woodchucks. But the fleeting sight of speckled fawn is probably be delayed until June or August.

TODDLER TIME

RECIPE FOR A GARDEN

by Jeannine Ponce

It's never to early to install a love of growing plants into a child's life. Gardens are magical places, even very tiny ones. Gardens should be simple and successful when done with young children.

GARDENS CAN BE PLANTED ANYWHERE

INDOOR PLANTS

- Sprout large seeds such as beans and corn. Push a sponge (or you could use crumpled paper towels) into a clear plastic jar. Pour enough water over the sponge to moisten completely. Ask children to help you poke a few seeds between the sponge and the side of the jar. (Be sure that the seeds are animated.)
- Plant grapefruit and orange seeds in small cups for a garden of glossy leafed plants. Be sure to plant the seeds before they dry completely for best results. Simply poke them into the soft potting soil.
- Bring in branches from shrubs to put in water and enjoy. Forsythia, pussy willow, and dogwood are signs of spring and early summer.
- Try growing avocado, onions, beets, and sweet potatoes in water jars. Stick four toothpicks around the middle of each vegetable and suspend it in a jar with enough water to cover the bottom part of the vegetable. Plant carrot and turnip tops in a shallow dish of water. Some will grow and others will not. Compare the foliage and first leaves of plants and sprouts.
- Bring in a sprouted potato to examine, and then plant it in a pot of soil. It may even grow!
- Try planting dwarf marigold seed in milk carton planters. They sprout and grow quickly, and the cartons can then be covered with gift paper and presented as Mother's Day gifts.

CREATE A GARDEN ENVIRONMENT

A garden spot in the room will be a special place for children to look at books or play quietly—and for teachers to concentrate. An old plastic baby pool will work well. Place flowers and collect pretty rocks to decorate. Set up a table with books about gardens, put garden prints on the wall (children are never too young to appreciate Monet), and make some giant floor pillows from flower prints. Paint a permanent garden on boards or a movable garden with tempera paints on windows.

Help toddlers cut out flowers from rainbow shades of construction paper. Even better, help them practice tearing shapes. Put centers on all of the non-symmetrical shapes and hang your garden of flowers from the ceiling or tape them to windows and doors. Make some plant environments from fast food take out containers. The inside lid will be the background. (Help children color a sky background.) and the bottom, filled with dirt can be a place for a grass lawn decorated with small plants and tiny clay ornaments. These resemble Japanese gardens. They also make great Mother's and Father's Day gifts.

OUTDOOR POCKET GARDEN

Get permission to plant a tiny garden in a sunny spot on the playground. Spade up the patch, then give all of your toddlers spoons. Show them how to break up the dirt lumps, and give them a few days to work the dirt. (Road-building and digging holes are okay at this time.) Then bring out the packages of seed. Show toddlers how to make rows (similar to making roads). Plant the seeds (with direction), and give children a sprinkling can to water the new seed beds. Watch for sprouts. Beans, corn, and pumpkins are usually successful seeds to plant. You might also set up a small step ladder or three dowels tied together into a triangle for the beans to grow into a living green teepee, and plant a few pumpkin seeds in the hills of corn as the native American did.

Lettuce and spinach seeds are also good early summer crops. Toddlers will take great delight in eating vegetables they grew themselves!

If there is no space available for an outdoor garden, plan to plant some mini-gardens in containers. Use buckets, baskets, barrels, planters, and boxes. Be sure to poke holes in the bottom for drainage, and water often.

Learning about gardens and plants also necessitates learning about caterpillars, butterflies, and a few other favorite bugs. Sing simple songs to piggyback tunes.

CATERPILLARS

(Tune: " Pop Goes the Weasel")

Up and down the flower stalk
The caterpillar's a busy guy.
He spins a bed and snuggles to sleep,
And OUT POPS A BUTTERFLY!

JP

YELLOW BUTTERFLY

(Tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

Fragile, yellow butterfly,
Like a flower in the sky.
Are you smiling as you roam,
Do you know your way back home?
Fragile yellow butterfly,
You're a flower in the sky.

JP

FINGERPLAYS

Here's a green leaf,
Here's a green leaf;
(Hold up hand.)
And here's a green leaf;
(Hold up other hand.)
One leaf and one leaf makes two.
(Hold up two fingers.)
Here's a tight bud
(Cup hands together tightly.)
That makes a flower,
Watch it bloom for you.
(Slowly open hands.)

Author unknown

SLEEPY FLOWERS

Five little flowers
(Hold up five fingers)
Standing in the sun.
See their heads drooping,
(Make fingers droop)
Bowing one by one.
(Make fingers bow.)
Down, down, down,
(Wiggle fingers to imitate rain.)
Falls the gentle rain.
The five little flowers
(Hold five fingers up.)
Lift their heads again!

Author unknown.

Talk about why flowers would droop in the hot sun.

IN THE

LET'S GARDEN

by Paula Gaj Sitarz

Invite children to join you in the garden as you share these stories and folktales about growing fruits, flowers, and vegetables.

In *Sunflower House* by Eve Bunting (Harcourt Brace) a young boy plants sunflower seeds in a circle, tends them, and watches them grow into the perfect sunflower house just right for summer fun. When the plants die, the young boy and his friends save the seeds so they can grow a sunflower house next summer. This delightful story in rhyme is complemented by vivid watercolors.

Henry Cole also uses a rhyming text in *Jack's Garden* (Greenwillow). Coupled with double-page spread illustrations in which the borders compliment each larger scene, author Cole shows youngsters step-by-step what happens in this delightful garden where rain falls on the seeds and the seedlings that sprout in the rain grow into plants on which buds form and then flower.

Sing, Henrietta! Sing! is an original and humorous story by Lynn Downey (Ideals) in which Henrietta and George are neighbors who decide to have a farm and sell their vegetables at a stand. There's only one problem. Customers are driven away by Henrietta's awful singing. When Henrietta promises not to sing, however, the plants wither. It's only when Henrietta sings that the plants thrive. George devises a plan that will allow Henrietta to sing and to keep their customers.

Bold colors and graphic design make *Growing Vegetable Soup* by Lois Ehlert (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) an appealing book for the youngest child. A youngster and parent get tools, plant seeds, and wait and watch as water and the sun help the plants grow into vegetables that are dug up, cut, and cooked.

In *Planting a Rainbow* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) author Elhert introduces a child and a parent who buy bulbs in the fall and plant them and who buy seedlings in the spring, sow the seeds, and then watch the rainbow grow. Red, orange and yellow flowers, green plants, blue and purple flowers bloom. All are labeled for children to pour over.

When Oliver visits his grandfather who grows his own vegetables in *Oliver's Vegetables* by Vivian French (Orchard Books), he tells Grandpa that he doesn't eat vegetables, only french fries. Grandpa says that Oliver can have french fries only if he finds the potatoes in the garden. If he finds something else, he has to eat it without complaining. Each day Oliver pulls a different veggie from the garden, eats it, and enjoys it. Finally, on Sunday, Oliver find the potatoes.

Mrs. Rose's Garden by Elaine Greenstein (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers) is the delightful story of Mrs. Rose who for many years grows a garden hoping to win a blue ribbon for one of her vegetables at the County Fair. This year Mrs. Rose knows she'll win ribbons for all her vegetables. She decides, instead, to plant one of each of her veggies in the garden of her neighbors so everyone will win a blue ribbon.

The Carrot Seed by Ruth Krauss (Harper & Row) is the classic, short story about a young boy who plants a carrot seed and is told that it won't grow. The boy pulls weeds, waters the plant, and ultimately grows a huge carrot.

In *Grandma's Garden* by Elaine Moore (Lothrop, Lee & Shephard Books), Kim visits her grandma in the spring to help her prepare her garden. From breaking ground to tying string in straight rows, from looking at seed packs, to sprinkling seeds and making a scarecrow, children will see all the steps in making a garden. Tension

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comes in the form of rain that washes the seeds and markers away and a frost that threatens the small plums growing on trees, but all is resolved satisfactorily.

Janet Stevens offers rich, detailed, humorous, and expressive watercolors in her delightful interpretation of *Tops & Bottoms* (Harcourt Brace). Hare and his family convince rich, but lazy, Bear to let them use his field. They'll do the work and split the profits evenly. For the first year's crop, Bear says he'll take the tops of the crops. Hare grows carrots, radishes, and beets so Bear only gets leaves. The same happens the following year when Bear picks bottoms and Hare cultivates lettuce, broccoli, and celery. The third year Bear demands the tops and bottoms from the crop, but Hare plants corn and Bear gets roots and tassels. Bear decides to grow his own crops.

In the traditional story, *The Little Red Hen: An Old Story* by Margot Zemach (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux). Hen finds a few grains of wheat and asks her friends to help her plant them, harvest, thresh, and take the grain to the mill. Goose, Cat, and Pig won't help, but they want to eat the resulting loaf of bread. After reading this story, make Quick, Healthy Bread.

MAKING BREAD: OBSERVING CHANGES

QUICK, HEALTHY BREAD

You'll Need: 2 1/2 cups white flour ▲ 3 TBLSP. oil ▲ 4 cups whole wheat flour ▲ 3 TBLSP. yeast ▲ 3 cups warm water (115°F—125°F) ▲ 1 cup powdered milk ▲ 1/3 cup honey or molasses ▲ 1 TBLSP. salt

What to Do:

1. Mix water, yeast, honey or molasses, and oil in a bowl.
2. Add half the total amount of flours and beat. Add remaining ingredients and stir well.
3. Let dough rise in a warm place for 15 minutes.
4. After rising, knead for 10 minutes. Sprinkle flour on table when kneading.
5. Divide dough in half. Place in two greased bread pans.
6. Let dough rise for 15 minutes in a warm place. Bake in 375°F oven for 20-30 minutes.

from *Hands-On Cooking: Through the Seasons* by Kathy Faggella (First Teacher Press)

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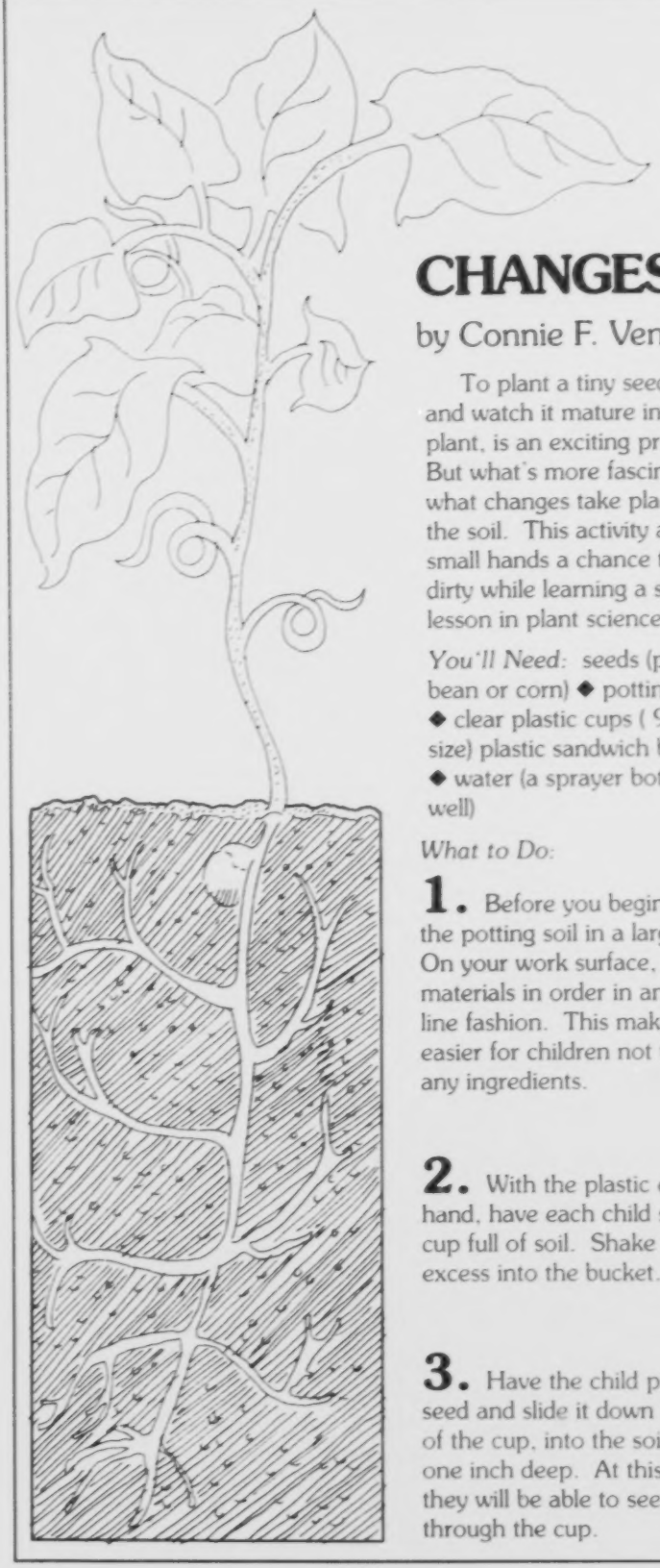


CHANGES UNDER THE SOIL

by Connie F. Venier

To plant a tiny seed in soil and watch it mature into a living plant, is an exciting process. But what's more fascinating is what changes take place under the soil. This activity allows small hands a chance to get dirty while learning a simple lesson in plant science.

You'll Need: seeds (preferably bean or corn) ◆ potting soil ◆ clear plastic cups (9 ounce size) plastic sandwich bags ◆ water (a sprayer bottle works well)

What to Do:

1. Before you begin, pour the potting soil in a large bucket. On your work surface, place all materials in order in an assembly line fashion. This makes it easier for children not to miss any ingredients.

2. With the plastic cup in hand, have each child scoop a cup full of soil. Shake off any excess into the bucket.

3. Have the child pick up the seed and slide it down the side of the cup, into the soil, about one inch deep. At this point, they will be able to see the seed through the cup.

4. Water the soil just enough to moisten the top.

5. Let each child place a sandwich bag over their cup. This will act as a mini-greenhouse and speed up germination process. Set near a warm sunny window.

6. You may need to water daily or every other day. Involve children in this process making sure though not to overwater. This will result in the seed rotting.

7. Within a few days, the bean will have sprouted and the roots will begin to take shape. This could be a good time to explain to children the important job the roots have.

▶ Roots hold up the plant. Without them, the plant would fall over.

▶ Roots take in the water you give them. They hold the water until the plant is ready for a drink.

8. When the seedling matures, children can take it home and plant it in their family's garden. Here they will be able to share with their family the next change it makes at harvest time.

End the Year With Castles and Dragons

by Jeannine Perez

Now is the ideal time of year to enjoy the magic of castles and dragons. Why not plan an end-of-the-year medieval fair for your children and parents? Add imagination to summer magic, and then tuck in some down-to-earth basic learning activities.

Preparations

Use the contents of your paper scrap box and odds-and-ends in your cupboards and shelves to recycle discards into things of beauty for your festival. The rewards are three-fold:

- children use their creativity,
- beautiful objects are created,
- and, best of all, you can clear out your shelves and drawers.

Also, this is a great way to organize your room and storage space. It gives closure to a great year and organizes your room for the next year and your next class. Supplement your materials with donations. Make a list of everything that you think would help enhance your theme, and send home a note such as the one below.

Begin with a Story

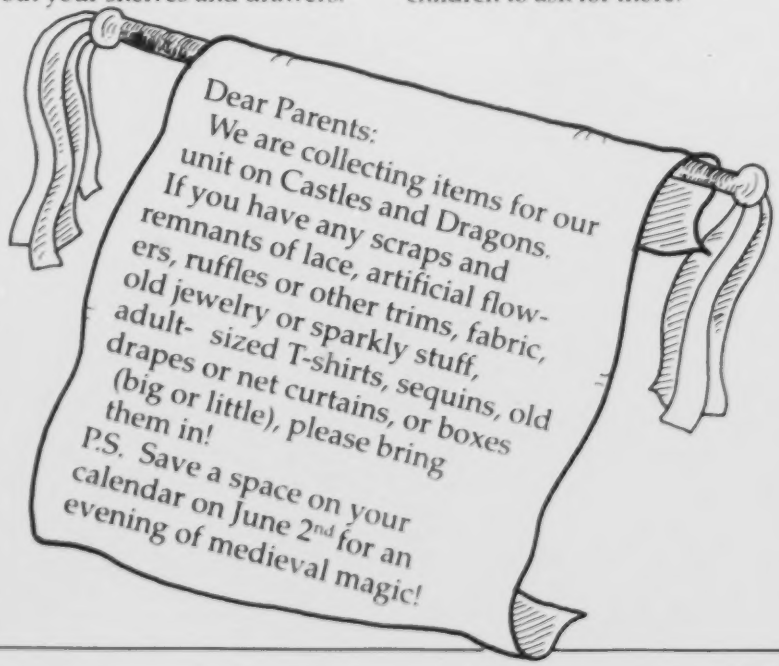
Begin your unit with familiar stories such as "The Three Bears," "Snow White" and "Red Riding Hood." Picture books with beautiful illustrations give form and substance to the stories and motivate children to ask for more.

Now, add some books that show what daily life during the Middle Ages was like. There are many books that have pictures and diagrams showing the parts of a castle. (*Castle* by David Macaulay (Houghton Mifflin) is wonderful). Look for illustrations of medieval fairs, royal gowns, and knight's apparel.

Prepare the Environment

If at all possible, plan your medieval fair for out-of-doors, but make plans to move inside in case of rain or cool weather. Your playground can be decorated as simply or elaborately depending on your imagination, time, and energy. Potted flowers (on loan), a tent or two, wooden crate food stands, a clothesline or fence art gallery, castles made from large boxes, or small box models of castles. Make billowing banners and flags cut from old sheets into giant packet shapes with a two-inch hem stitched in top, then hung from dowels and painted by children.

These decorations all add to the festive atmosphere. Consider playing English madrigal music on a tape player, dressing children in costumes, and making paper maché dragons to add even more excitement to your setting.



Dear Parents:

We are collecting items for our unit on Castles and Dragons. If you have any scraps and remnants of lace, artificial flowers, ruffles or other trims, fabric, old jewelry or sparkly stuff, adult- sized T-shirts, sequins, old drapes or net curtains, or boxes (big or little), please bring them in!

P.S. Save a space on your calendar on June 2nd for an evening of medieval magic!

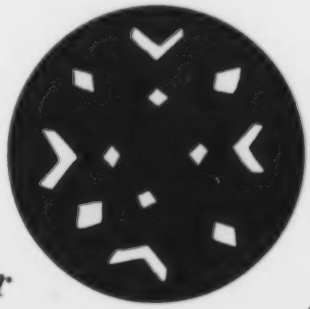
Make a Castle

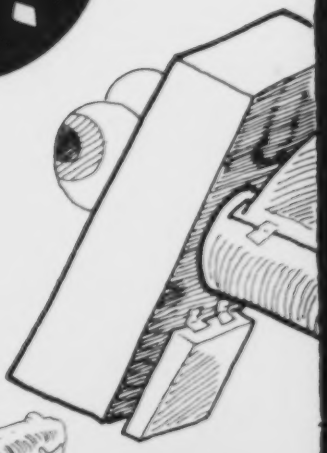
After reading many fairy tales and comparing illustrations of castles in the books, create your own. You can do so with appliance boxes. They make castles that you can decorate together and enter. Help children make smaller ones from a combination of shoe boxes, cardboard rolls, oatmeal or corn meal boxes, and cereal boxes. Pile one box on top of another until the architecture pleases you and glue them in place. Paint the castle gray, then decorate with a crayon or black marker to make your castle look like it has old stone walls. Draw or paint on green ivy vines creeping up the walls and around the windows.

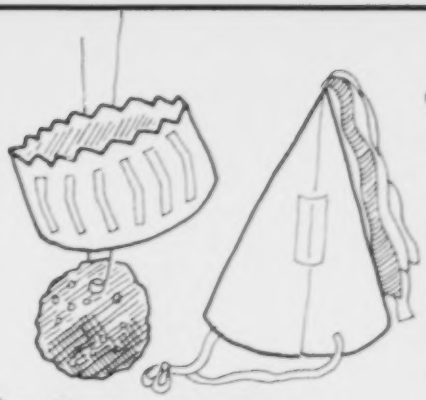
Stained glass windows (also called roundels), were used in cathedrals and castles. Make some to add to the beauty of your castle. You may also decide to make stained glass windows to hang in sunny classroom windows. Fold and cut circles of black paper using the techniques for making snowflakes. Fold a standard sized sheet of black paper in half, then in fourths, then in eighths. Round the outside edges with scissors, and cut diamond shapes and other small geometric cuts in the folded paper. Unfold and back the openings with different colors of colored tissue paper or cellophane.

Make an Invitation for Parents

Fold a piece of paper in half. By cutting a stair step edge up and down the top edge of your card and a door on the bottom, you can easily turn the card into a section of a castle. Ask children to illustrate their invitations with arched windows, small tower openings and doors, and suggest that princesses, kings, queens, and of course, dragons, may be peeking out.







Make Costumes

Crowns Make a royal crown by measuring a strip of paper long enough to fit a child's head with a little overlap. Cut jagged points or a curved design across the top, and make slits as though making a Chinese lantern (being careful not to cut all the way through the top or bottom). Decorate the crown with designs along the top of the crown using a decorating paper punch. Glue on foil jewels. Fasten the ends of the crown together to fit, and glue another strip of stiff paper around the bottom to give additional strength.

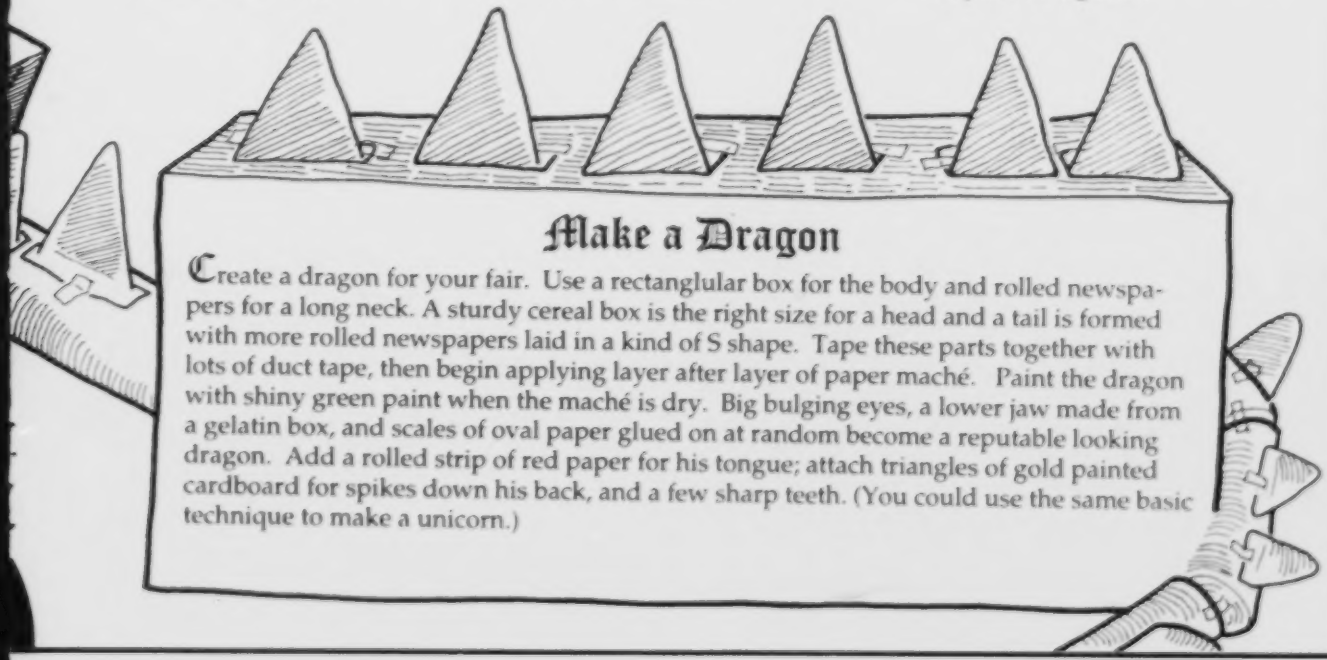
Wimple hats Staple a quarter circle cut from a 12 x 18 inch piece of paper into a tall skinny hat. Streamers can be cut from multicolored strips of paper, ribbons, and laces, or narrow strips of torn cloth. Fasten the streamers to the peak of the hat. You will probably need to tape or staple ties under the chin.

Wild morning glory vines or dandelion stems can be shaped into chains and circles and then used to make natural crowns, wreathes, necklaces, and bracelets.

Tunics Ask parents for discarded adult sized T-shirts, and tranform them into tunics and royal robes. By changing the way you decorate the tunics, they can become robes, dresses, jester's clothes, or peasant' s tunics. Trim your creations with sequins, lace, and other trims.

Capes Any square of fabric can become a magic cape. Place it on the children diagonally, then cut holes for arms, and fold the top point down for a collar. Trim the cape edges with wild remnants of bright fabric, lace rickrack, or use upholstery trim. Fringe the edge, roll it, or cut off ruffles from old curtains and tack into the front edge. You can make a different kind of cape from a circle of cloth with a hole cut in the center for the head.

Jewelry Use cast-off jewelry and rings, or make pendants from cardboard circles. Glue a simple geometric or spiral designs on the cardboard with cord. Crumple a piece of aluminum foil, flatten it, then cover the cardboard circle and glue in place. Paint the foil with water colors for an aged appearance and decorate as you wish with small sparkly stones, sequins and glitter.



Make a Dragon

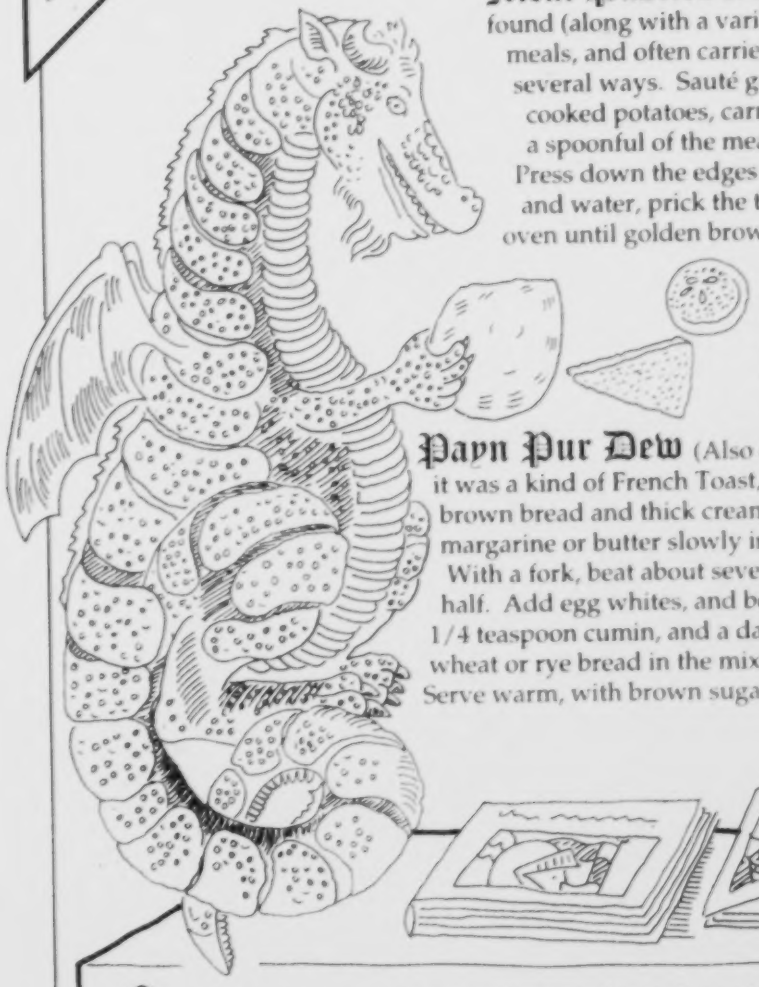
Create a dragon for your fair. Use a rectanglular box for the body and rolled newspapers for a long neck. A sturdy cereal box is the right size for a head and a tail is formed with more rolled newspapers laid in a kind of S shape. Tape these parts together with lots of duct tape, then begin applying layer after layer of paper maché. Paint the dragon with shiny green paint when the maché is dry. Big bulging eyes, a lower jaw made from a gelatin box, and scales of oval paper glued on at random become a reputable looking dragon. Add a rolled strip of red paper for his tongue; attach triangles of gold painted cardboard for spikes down his back, and a few sharp teeth. (You could use the same basic technique to make a unicorn.)

SPRING INTO MAGIC

Make Food

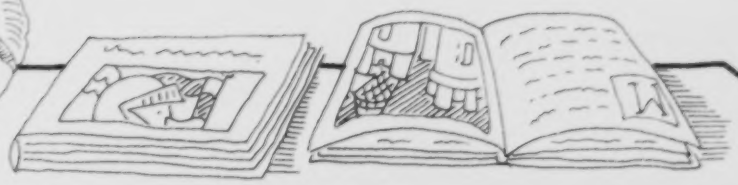
Medieval foods also spur the imagination. The royalty and rich considered meals as theatre productions and art, and they became elaborate productions; from the pantier, who presented the bread to the high table, to the chief cook wearing a badge of a long handled spoon that swung from a chain. Each course was a ceremony.

Meat Pasties of one kind or another were also commonly found (along with a variety of other meats), served at many meals, and often carried on trips. You can make your own in several ways. Sauté ground meat, then mix it with diced cooked potatoes, carrots, and onions. Children can help place a spoonful of the meat mixture on one refrigerated biscuit. Press down the edges to seal, brush with a mixture of egg yolk and water, prick the top with a fork and bake in a moderate oven until golden brown.



Canel Cucumber Slice cucumbers and sprinkle each slice with cinnamon/sugar. (an odd taste combination).

Payn Pur Dew (Also called Lost Bread). In medieval times it was a kind of French Toast, made with lots of spices, eggs, brown bread and thick cream. Here is a simple variation. Heat margarine or butter slowly in a heavy frying pan. Don't let it burn. With a fork, beat about seven egg yolks with 1/4 cup milk or half and half. Add egg whites, and beat again. Stir in 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon, 1/4 teaspoon cumin, and a dash salt. Dip triangle quarters of whole wheat or rye bread in the mixture and sautéuntil brown on both sides. Serve warm, with brown sugar.

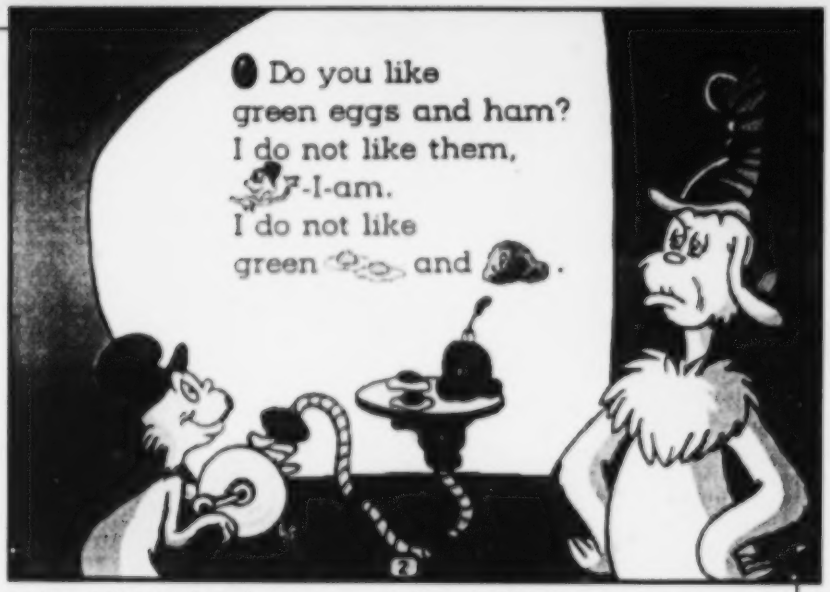


Now that you have set the stage for your festival, consider the entertainment. Music, food, and elegant dress will furnish an atmosphere that is magical. You may also wish to clip artwork and writings on clothes lines strung between trees or to a fence so that parents can see how the use of enchantment has also encouraged language development and a love of books. Covering a small table with a heavy curtain panel and displaying your favorite books will give parents a chance to browse through their children's favorite stories.

Stroll through the festival you've created, listen to GREENSLEEVES and congratulate yourself on a day of magic for you, your children, and their families. Journey to the land of make believe where everything is possible to those who see the beauty and magic in our world.

COMPUTER TIPS FOR SUMMER

by Evelyn J. Woldman



If spring is here, summer isn't far behind! All of us in the education business know how much change—growth and learning—take place during the summer months.

To those who are lucky enough to own a home computer or have access to one, there are some wonderful early childhood programs which can enhance the growing experience over the summer, while providing some wonderful and entertaining times at the computer, particularly on those rainy days. To those of you who may be caregivers, teachers recommending to parents, or parents yourselves, these pieces are known for their self-explanatory nature; that is, once you get them started, children should be fine exploring on their own. However, please remember: THE COMPUTER IS NOT A BABY-SITTER!

Ideally, these programs should be done either with another child or a parent/caregiver/teacher to maximize language development—and fun!

■ *JumpStart Preschool, JumpStart Pre-K, JumpStart Kindergarten,* (Knowledge Adventure (Mac/Windows compatible) This series is filled with bright colors, silly sounds, and a plethora of readiness activities, including reading, numbers, telling time, concentration, matching, auditory discrimination, color identification, and lots more games for growing! (NOTE: Those of you with older children might be interested to know that this series "grows" through Grade 5!)

■ *Living Books Series: Green Eggs and Ham* (Broderbund (Mac/Windows compatible) With each new title in this series, the publisher seems to do better! This beloved Dr. Seuss tale is brought to life in an animated, interactive way, while the reading stimulates and entices young pre-readers to make up their own rhymes to go with the story!

■ Other *Living Books* titles to recommend for summer fun:

- *Dr. Seuss's ABC*
- *The Cat in the Hat*
- *Stellaluna*

■ *Sesame Street: Reading Is Fun, Toddler Edition* (Creative Wonders) This is a two CD set with interpretations of two classic Sesame Street tales: "Grover's Travels," and "Grouchketeers." This is actually a little tough for toddlers, but with an adult pre-schoolers will enjoy the familiar characters as they learn to understand emotions and practice readiness skills such as sorting, number recognition, rhyming, and object and shape recognition.

■ *Funny Monsters for Tea* (Sunburst Communications) This delightful program enhance students' pre- and beginning reading skills through the use of rhyme, incorporating spelling, math, time telling, music, and art. There are six challenging and creative learning activities to choose from and characters are humorous and engaging.

■ *Paint, Write & Play* (Learning Company) For those of you who want to help your youngsters experiment with a little writing over the summer, *Paint, Write & Play* introduces young children to the fun of writing, illustrating, and publishing their own work. The colorful graphics and easy-to-understand activity centers help children increase their vocabulary and their ability to express themselves in words and pictures.

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CAMP IN THE CLASSROOM

by Tania K. Cowling

It's the end of the year and you want your children to leave with a memorable experience. Enjoy a taste of summer by turning your classroom into a campground for a day or even a week. The activities are fun and educational, too!!!

GETTING THE CAMP SITE READY

Arrange the tables in the classroom together to make at least four groups. These clusters are imaginary cabins in your camp. Identify each cabin group by assigning a color to it (red, green, yellow, blue, etc.). Cover the table tops with colored construction paper or hang a colored flag to distinguish the groups.

Next gather the entire camp group together to choose a logo and mascot. For example, if you choose "Blake's Bears," you could decorate the campground (classroom) with stuffed bears. Hang logo signs around the room.

In the common areas of the camp, set up a few tents. If you don't have access to the real thing, drape sheets or blankets over a clothesline or some chairs.

Every camp needs a campfire; this is the place for stories, songs, and grub (snacks). Create a campfire by nailing or gluing three or four logs together. Insert strips of red foil or cellophane to resemble flames.

LOGO SHIRTS:

Have each child bring in a white T-shirt from home. Purchase a box of fabric crayons. (Crayola makes them and they sell at craft stores) Make cardboard stencils of your chosen logo design. Children can trace this stencil using the fabric crayons on white paper. After the drawing is complete, the paper is placed face down on the T-shirt and pressed with an iron. The design will transfer to the shirt. (**Note:** be careful using letters and numbers; unless you mirror image the design, these will be backwards).

ORIENTATION

Begin your first morning of official camp with a sounding of Reveille (recording or a real trumpet). As children gather together in a designated area, prepare to raise a flag and sing your favorite patriotic song. Maybe you can also have a sing-along of popular camp songs around the campfire. Research children's music books or gather recordings of these songs. Announce the schedule for the day (events like craft centers, games, nature studies, and eating at the mess hall.) Locate your events at the different centers by color. Post this schedule on the board so all the groups know where to be. It would be wise to get help from a few parent volunteers (camp counselors) for the day.

NATURE WALKS

Take the groups outdoors for a nature walk. This will serve two purposes: studying nature in its beauty and collecting objects that can be used in the craft centers. While outdoors, plan a scavenger hunt list. Give each group a grocery bag and send them around the grounds with their counselor looking for and gathering each item on the list.

Suggestions for the List:

- 3-5 different types of leaves
- Pine cones
- Dried weeds
- Small branch
- Acorns
- Round rocks
- Flowers
- Blades of grass
- Other items common to your area.

CRAFT CENTERS

Branch Weaving On your nature walk, look for a small three or four-pronged branch. Cut a piece of yarn about 20 inches long and tie one end of

S'MORE BARS

You'll Need: 1/2 stick butter ▲ 1 cup graham cracker crumbs ▲ 3/4 cup sweetened condensed milk 6 oz. bag of chocolate chips ▲ 2 cups miniature marshmallows

What to Do:

1. Melt the butter in a baking pan in the oven.
2. Remove the pan from the oven and sprinkle the graham cracker crumbs over the melted butter.
3. Pour the condensed milk over the mixture. Add a layer of chocolate chips over the milk and then a layer of marshmallows.
4. Bake in a 350°F oven for about 30 minutes. Cool and then cut into squares. (An 8-inch square pan works well).

the yarn to the base of the branch. Begin to weave the yarn in and out of the prongs. (There is no right or wrong way to do it.) Cut lengths of yarn in other colors and tie the next piece of yarn onto the last. Proceed in the same manner.

- **Leaf Prints** Have children place several different leaves on cardboard. Let them paint the top side of the leaf with green and yellow paints. Next have them carefully place a sheet of black construction paper over the leaves.
- **Pressed Flowers** Lay a piece of waxed paper on top of a paper towel. Take small flowers or petals and arrange them on the waxed paper. Place another sheet of waxed paper on top. Help children press the arrangement with a medium hot iron; first seal the edges and then iron into the center. When this cools, cut the sealed craft into geometric shapes, punch a hole at the top and thread with yarn for a hanger. Display these in a sunny window or area.
- **Rock Sculptures and Painting** Have your campers glue rocks (different sizes) one on top of the other creating designs. Paint the rocks different colors and patterns.

GAMES

- **Touch Blue** This is a quick and fun game in an open space. Gather up all your campers. Have one person as the instructor. On command, ask the group to touch something blue on anybody they see. Quickly run through a variety of instructions such as: *"Touch red," "Touch a white sneaker," "Touch a hair ribbon," "Touch buttons,"* and so on.
- **Animal Clues** Pin a picture of an animal on the back of each child. Have children try to guess what animal is on their back by having the other campers give helpful clues. For example, if a bear's picture is displayed, children could say: *"He is very big;" "He could be black or brown;" "He loves to eat honey."*

SWIM TIME

Gather your campers in their color groups. Tell them that they are going to swim with no water. Do imaginary strokes like the breast stroke, freestyle, backstroke, butterfly and sidestroke. Line the groups up for a race. Call the strokes out and have each child go across the room to a finish line (like a relay race). This is a good exercise workout for the campers.

WRITING LETTERS

All campers are encouraged to write letters home to parents and loved ones. Have them write about their fun experiences at camp today. Seal the letters in an envelope and address them home. These can be hand delivered at the close of the day or week.

TO THE MESS HALL

Drop by to pick up your lunch at the Mess Hall. Prior to this camp day, send a letter home to parents for them to pack their child's lunch in a shoe box on a specified day. Have them tape the boxes shut and address them to their child, c/o the camp's logo name. Pass out the boxes and have campers eat lunch together.

BUNK INSPECTIONS

At the close of the day, ask the campers to clean up their cabins and campgrounds. This is the time to put the classroom back to the original floor plan.

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BACK IN THE BOOK CORNER

NATURAL CHANGES

by Sandra Malcolm

Change is all around us. It is a natural part of life. Through picture books, children can become aware of this natural process. With awareness comes acceptance.

WHEN I WAS FIVE

by Arthur Howard (Hartcourt Brace and Company) tells of a six-year-old boy who reflects back on his days as a five year old. He names some things that have changed and some that have not.

BEFORE READING, invite children to close their eyes and think about all of their favorite things to do as a _____ (one year less than the children in their class). When they have something to share, have them discuss what they pictured.

AFTER READING, ask questions such as, *"Did everything change for Jeremy from five to six years old? What did change?" "What did not change?" "Do you think there would be more changes if Jeremy thought back to when he was two? Why?" "Jeremy talks about his best friend Mark but there is another friend in this book who is always there with him. Can you figure out who that is?"*

ACTIVITIES

◆ This book was illustrated using water colors and black pen. Make these available for children to use during free time. Discuss the technique before having children do it independently.

◆ Have children make their own book of "Favorite Things." Encourage them to write and illustrate their books. Make a class library containing their books so others may enjoy them.

◆ Using a familiar tune (such as "Farmer in the Dell") have the class create a song about the things they could do at one, two, three, four and up to whatever age they are now.

WHEN I AM EIGHT

by Joan Lowery Nixon (Dial Books for Young Readers) describes what a young child experiences what his big brother is able to do and imagines what he will do when he is eight.

BEFORE READING, ask if anyone has an older brother or sister. Ask what their older brother/sister can do that they are too little to do. Encourage children to think about things they will be able to do when they are eight years old. Discuss these.

AFTER READING, ask questions such as *"Where do you think Herbie got the ideas for the things he would do when he was eight?" "Why did he keep saying 'Who cares?' " "How do you think Herbie feels about his big brother? Why?" "Who did you notice was in every picture with Herbie?"*

ACTIVITIES

◆ Make a time capsule. Have each child draw a picture of what she will look like at age eight, her favorite color, something she will be able to do, etc. Place each child's entries into a separate yellow mailing envelope on which a label is attached that reads, *"Dear Mom and Dad, please save this until I am eight years old. It is my time capsule of what I thin I will be like when I am eight."*

◆ Think about what you could draw in a picture that has a sign saying, **This is the best class in the whole world.** Provide a long sheet of newsprint for the children to make a mural with those words written on top. Hang the mural for all to enjoy.

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WHERE BUTTERFLIES GROW

by Joanne Ryder (Lodestar Books, E.P. Dutton) takes the reader through all of the changes that take place as an egg becomes a caterpillar and then a butterfly.

BEFORE READING, talk about some things that grow in a garden. Tell children that the story is about something that grows in a garden but we cannot eat it. *"What do you think it might be?"* Show them the cover of the book as another clue. Discuss what children already know about butterflies.

AFTER READING, ask: *"What did the title, Where Butterflies Grow, mean?"*
Talk about why children think the illustrator put pictures in small boxes on some of the pages.
Ask: *"How did the caterpillar keep the bird from eating him?"* Discuss other ways animals have of protecting themselves.

ACTIVITIES

◆ Read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle (Putnam) as a make-believe book. Compare and contrast the two books.

◆ Provide magnifying glasses in the classroom to help children understand the idea of "close up." The illustrator used close up pictures of detail in small boxes on some pages.

◆ Have children act out the story as you reread it, creating movements for what they hear.

◆ Make a class Butterfly Log in which children can write about and/or draw pictures of butterflies that they see when they are away from school. Share the entries made in the log. You can also add to the log.

AN EGG IS AN EGG

by Nicki Weiss (G.P. Putnam & Sons) captures some of the many changes that take place in a child's life.

BEFORE READING: bring in an egg to share with the class. Have them tell everything they know about eggs. Write their responses on chart paper. If they do not suggest that it hatches into a bird (or whatever type of egg you are talking about), make that suggestion. Ask if the egg and the animal are the same? Discuss how they are different. How has the egg changed? Can children think of other things that change into something else? Write their ideas on chart paper.

AFTER READING, check your list. Did you name some of the things that change that were mentioned in the book? Look at the five pictures of the house. Name the things you see that have stayed the same. Name what has changed. What does that tell us about change? Ask children why they think the book is printed on different colored paper. What do they notice about each pair of pages?

ACTIVITIES

◆ Have children find as many examples of change as they can. Provide some examples (i.e. ice to water; milk to butter).

◆ Draw time lines on sheets of newsprint. Begin with birth and have as many numbers as the age of the oldest child. Give each child a time line on which to draw pictures (or paste pictures from home) showing them at each age and what they could do.

◆ Set up "change" experiments such as ice melting; a nail rusting in water; a seed growing for children to observe over time. Have them draw pictures or write daily in a journal which is placed beside the experiment. This could be a group activity in which each group has a different experiment to observe and record, then report on their findings.

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NEXT STOP

NEW BEGINNINGS

by Barbara Fischer

When did you first begin to notice? It happens slowly, quietly, in subtle ways. Perhaps it was the loose tooth your proud pre-kindergartner showed you, or when you offered to tie a shoelace. Suddenly a grown up voice proclaimed, *"I can do it myself."* Small changes? Yes. They pop up when you least expect them. But these changes mean a new beginning is taking place.

Your pre-kindergartners are outgrowing preschool. It's time to move on to the elementary school experience. As exciting as this step is, this separation might be the most profound break with the past that children experience until they leave home as young adults. You are in a unique position to make this a smooth, happy, and even exciting transition.

Preschool is a partnership between parents, teachers, and children. Now is the time to strengthen that partnership to work for a common goal. What can you do? Listen to parents, listen to children, and listen to your own good judgment.

PARENTS

They need your support, too. Listen to their concerns. Try these ideas to lessen their anxiety.

◀ **Information** Contact your local school district to find how parents can obtain information about registering their child and other school related issues. Keep school phone numbers and the names of contact people handy.

◀ **Attend Open Houses.** Schools usually set aside a night to invite parents and other interested people to view their classrooms. This is a great way for both parents and children to observe kindergarten activities. Watch as children pick up on the similarities between preschool and kindergarten. Inform parents of the dates and times of the various open houses in your area.

CHILDREN

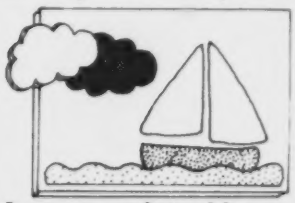
You can ease this transition through the times of your day.

◀ **Circle time** *Look what you can do now!* Listen and answer as many of children's questions as you can. Have a conversation about all the things they can do now that they couldn't do before they came to preschool. Make a chart with the headings, "Before I came to preschool" and "Now." List the tasks in the appropriate columns. Children will be amazed to see how much more they can do now.

◀ **Science Time** *You're growing up!* If you made a growth chart at the beginning of the school year, compare this with the current height of your children. Does anyone have a loose tooth? Who needed to buy new shoes? Does that jacket feel tight? All of these things say you're growing bigger.

◀ **Activity Time** *What's the same?* In many ways, kindergarten will be the same. Read a book such as *Starting School* by Kate Petty and Lisa Kopper (Franklin Watts) that shows blocks, toys, crayons, paints, scissors, tables, and chairs in a kindergarten classroom. Ask each child to find one item that is the same in your room. Make a "Same and Different" chart to show how many things will be familiar and what might be different. Which list is longer?

◀ **Math Time** *You have learned so much!* Take out the blocks and make a counting tower. Put one block on top of the other as you count. With all the children helping, the tower should reach great heights! Let them show you how many shapes they know, what wonderful buildings they can build, how many puzzles they can put together, and how many other tasks they can accomplish.



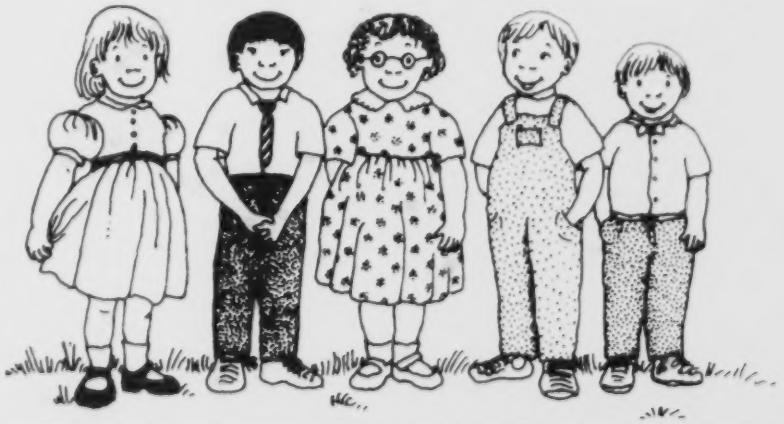
◀ **Language Arts** Many children often feel that "no one will be my friend" when they enter a new school or class. This is a good time to read some of the many books that address this issue. *A Tiger Called Thomas* by Charlotte Zolotow (Lothrup, Lee, & Shepard) describes a little boy's fear that he cannot make new friends when he moves to a new neighborhood. Children will relate to Thomas and delight in the surprise ending. Although this is a "Halloween" book, the holiday is used as a means of easing Thomas' fears. There are many good stories showing that children do have these feelings and how they resolved them. Here are a few more.

- *The Growing Book* by Ruth Krauss (Harper and Row)
- *A Pocket Full of Cricket* by Rebecca Caudill (Holt, Rinhart and Winston)
- *Timothy Goes to School* by Rosemary Wells (Dial Books for Young Readers)

◀ **Kindergarten Day** *Let's pretend "kindergarten"!* Plan a day similar to one in kindergarten. Ask you local kindergarten teacher for ideas. You and the children can design and hang a large banner reading, "We are ready for kindergarten." Create special cards listing the day's activities and place a star next to each task as it is completed during your day. Let children decorate the card to show parents.

◀ **Time to Move On** *We're ready!* Bring the preschool years to a close with a special program. Involve children in your planning. Put together some songs, fingerplays and perhaps a few words from you about each child's special personality. Invite parents to attend this event. Follow the program with simple refreshments such as coffee and cookies. Programs like this are one way of saying good-by to the preschool experience.

Children, like adults, need a time of preparation for a new experience. The more prepared children are, the smoother the transition will be. This wonderful partnership can help children feel ready to say good-by to preschool and to begin their new journey into the world of the elementary school.



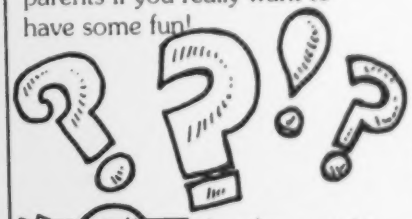
HELPFUL HINTS

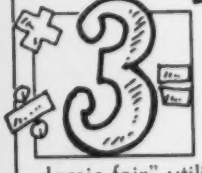
END THE YEAR IN STYLE

by Gail P. Jones

As your children approach the end of the "academic" year, let them create booklets for next year's incoming class. By writing (or dictating) about daily activities and class routine (as well as expectations), you will find September a breeze!

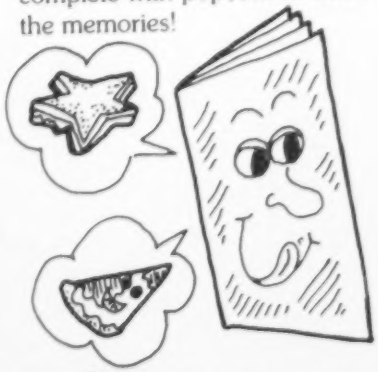
Play fun games to review all the things children have learned throughout the year. Let them work on the questions, etc. for games such as *Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune*, and *Twenty Questions*. Include parents if you really want to have some fun!





Another way to share the pride in children's growth with their parents is with an "academic fair" utilizing math skills, reading ability, as well as the ability to follow multiple directions.

If your parents attended activities and special events throughout the year and took videos or photographs, plan a "movie matinee or night" complete with popcorn to share the memories!



All children have a favorite food. Let those who wish to participate make a recipe book. Many parents of "fussy" eaters will be eternally grateful!

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As the end of the year approaches, you might want to leave some time for letting children create their own "treasure boxes" made out of large dress boxes. By covering the outside with illustrations of favorite times throughout the year and covering with contact paper, each child can make a box for storing favorite art work and writing samples.

Before leaving for the summer, children may want to send "thank you" notes to all support staff, and substitutes for helping them "grow" throughout the year.

And, last but not least, let each child make a special clay bead for each of his classmates to string on friendship bracelets the last day of June. Sing "Make New Friends" and pass the tissues!

MAKE A CLASS YEARBOOK

by Susan M. Root

At the end of the school year, it is important for children to have a sense of closure to ease their transition into summer. Making a class yearbook is one way to look back on the year and to provide children and families with a "memory book" of the year.

From the teacher or caregiver's point of view, it is important to have a project that is not too time-consuming and that emphasizes child input. All that is necessary is a photocopier and a small amount of time from the teacher and possibly a parent volunteer. One easy format includes:

- Title page with the name of the program, class, and year
- A list of favorite activities dictated by the class
- A self-portrait
- A drawing and dictation of a favorite activity
- A drawing of friends
- Individual student profiles which include a photo and child-dictated responses to a list of questions
- Teacher profiles which include a photo and child-dictated descriptions.
- Real photos of individual children can be added after copies are made.

You can begin the project by asking children to recall what some of their favorite activities have been. Record these on a chart and later type or write these on a sheet of paper to be copied.

The self-portrait and drawing pages will be blank except for headings such as **Here I am at school** and **At school I like to:**. These will be completed after the yearbook has been copied.

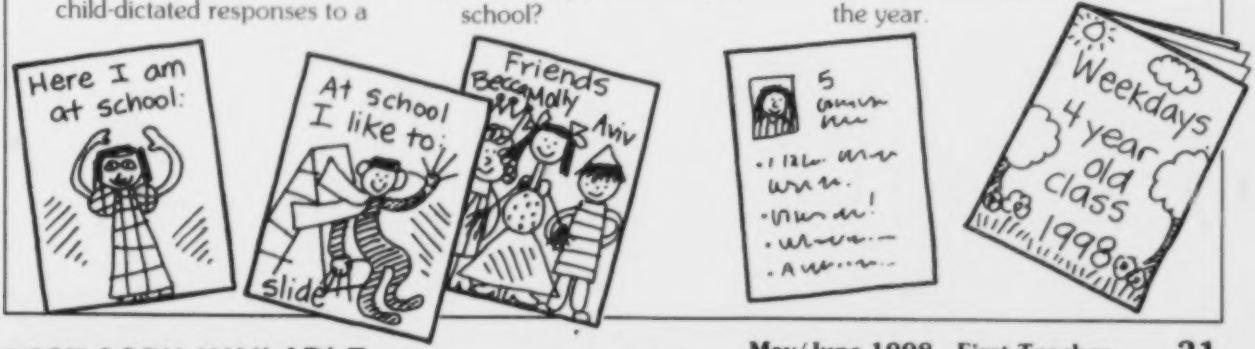
Parent volunteers can take dictation from individual children for the Student Profiles. Some questions you might ask are:

- How old are you?
- Where do you live?
- What do you like?
- What don't you like?
- What do you like to do at school?
- What would you like to be when you grow up?

Once each child has been interviewed, the dictations can be placed alongside a wallet-sized photo of the child. This section of the yearbook will be the longest. It is fun (and informative) to ask children to dictate statements about the adults in the program. Parents and children will enjoy reading and re-reading these entries.

At this point, pages can be photocopied and the yearbook can be stapled together with a cover. Wallpaper, laminated construction paper, or 28 lb. cover stock from a print shop all work well.

Once the yearbooks are assembled, children can work on the illustrations and you can help them glue in any photographs of themselves that you have taken throughout the year. Each yearbook is really personalized and provides a wonderful keepsake of the year.



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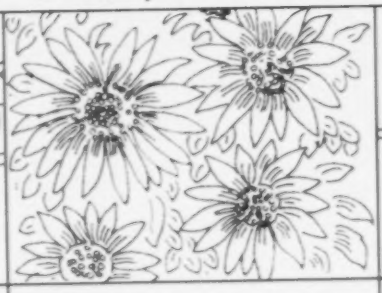
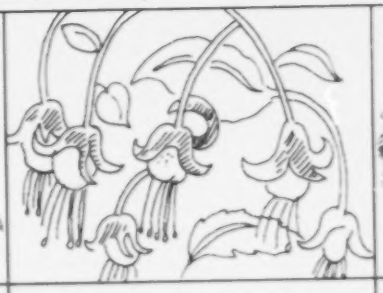
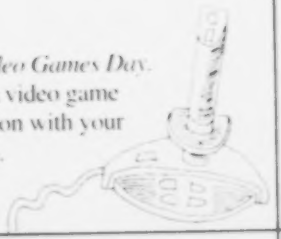
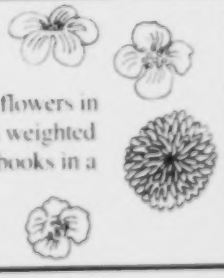
PLANNER FOR PARENTS

July

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
			1
5 Take a circle of rope or yarn and put it in the yard. Study all you can find in it.	6 Make some musical instruments out of trash such as aluminum pie pans, containers, etc.	7 It's *Video Games Day.* Have a video game marathon with your friends. 	8
12 Have a cookout for *National Baked Bean and Hot Dog Month.* Be creative.	13 Create your own special garden in a small area. Check changes daily.	14 It's *Bastille Day.* Try french bread and french fries. Create your own photo postcards to send to friends of things you do.	15
19 *National Ice Cream Day.* Mix 3/4 cup milk, 1 cup heavy cream, 1/3 cup sugar, 1/2 teaspoon vanilla, 1 cold egg in a one-pound coffee can. Put in three-pound can of ice and rock salt.	20 It's *Space Week/Moon Day.* Go to the library and get books and/or videos of the first trip to the moon.	21 Draw with chalk on blacktop or cement. Practice letters and numbers.	22
26 It's *Jan Berenstain's Birthday*— read a Berenstain Bear book every hour today.	27 Create your own stories about your family using the Berenstain Bear books as models.	28  Press some flowers in newspapers weighted down with books in a dress box.	29

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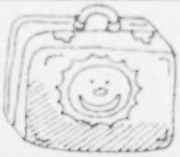
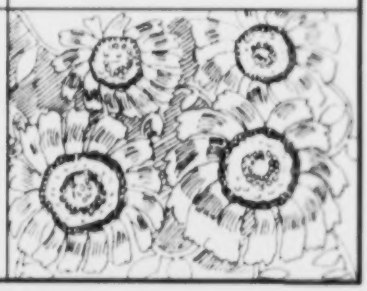
PLANNER FOR PARENTS

Thursday	Friday	Saturday
It's *Canada Day*. Try to learn some French phrases! *First quarter moon.*	**2** Make plans for the whole month to go along with Anti-Boredom Month.	**3** It's *Stay Out of the Sun Day*. Make a sun hat with multiple large circles of wet newspapers over a bowl.	**4** It's *Independence Day*. Decorate your bikes and wagons and have a parade for the 4th of July!
Go blueberry picking at a local farm. Create recipes using berries.	**9** *Full moon*. Pretend to be going to the moon. Make plans. Pack things. Act out the trip.	**10** Make a picnic basket with all supplies to use throughout the summer.	**11** It's *National Cheer Up the Lonely Day*. Visit relatives and neighbors who are alone. Cheer them up.
It's *Rembrandt's birthday*. Paint your own self-portrait. Make a frame with natural materials.	**16** Recycle plastic containers for water sprinklers to use on hot days. *Last quarter moon.*	**17**  Make a suitcase of dress-up clothes. Ask Mom for contributions.	**18** Make pretzels with 4 cups flours, 1 package yeast, 1 1/2 cups of water, 1 teaspoon sugar, and 1 teaspoon salt. Bake at 425°F for 15 minutes. Save some to eat with ice cream
Use a paint-brush in water to erase all the chalk writing you did yesterday.	**23** *New Moon*. Clean all washable toys outside in tubs of water. Which ones float?	**24** Write letters to distant relatives and prepare stationary to say, *"thinking of you."*	**25** Make pizza dough and assemble ingredients for a sleepover pizza party!
Have a Neighborhood Clean-Up Day. Go from street to street with friends.	**30** Create a counting mural about your street. How many houses, cars, oak trees, swing sets...?	**31** Boil flowers, leaves, and sticks and tie-dye a t-shirt.	

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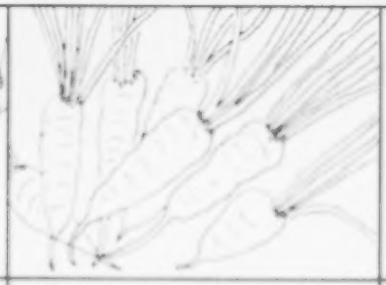
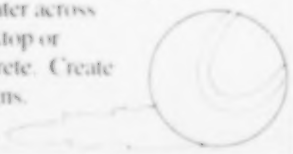
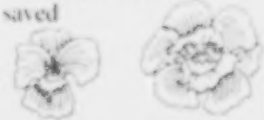
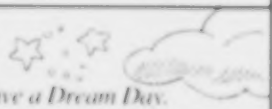
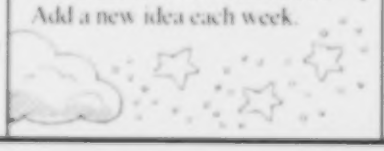
PLANNER FOR PARENTS

AUGUST

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
2 It's *American Family Day/ Friendship Day*. Have a cookout for friends and family!	**3** It's *National Smile Week/ National Clown Week*. Create clown acts and costumes!	**4** Think up other circus acts and put on a neighborhood circus!	**5**
9 It's *Daughter's Day*. Have a tea party for daughters young and old.	**10** Make a birdbath for our feathered friends. Keep it fresh daily.	**11** It's Don Freeman's birthday, author of *Corduroy* and other books. Collect large buttons off old clothes and create a game for older pre-schoolers.	**12**
16 It's *National Aviation Week*. Visit a nearby airport.	**17** It's Davy Crockett's birthday. Pretend to go on a bear hunt. Act out Davy Crockett.	**18** Count how many airplanes fly overhead while lying on a blanket for an hour.	**19**
23 It's *Artists for American Arts Appreciation Month*. Go to an art museum. It's Donald Crews (author) birthday. Read *Sail Away* and make a toy sailboat. **30**	**24** Make a cake and freeze it. You will be so happy when it is needed later. Go on a picnic to celebrate the end of August. Make creative sandwiches for *National Sandwich Month*. **31**	**25** It's *Kiss and Make Up Day*. Make friends with anyone you've hurt.	**26** It's *Women's Equality Day*.

Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		
		1 It's Gail Gibbons' birthday (children's author). Go to the zoo and read her book!
It's *National Greeting card Day*. Make cards for friends.	**6** Roll a tennis ball dipped in water across blacktop or concrete. Create designs. 	**7** It's *National Scuba Diving Day*. Use posterboard and draw a picture of an underground scene. Color and cut it into a puzzle.	**8** *Full moon*. Stay up and see what you can see by the light of the moon.
It's *Clean-up Day*. Not official. Just a good idea! What needs it?	**13** It's *International Left-Handers Day*. See how many things you can do left-handed. (right-handed, if already left-handed)	**14** Make food for one whole day. Use it tomorrow when you relax! *Last quarter moon.*	**15** It's *National Relaxation Day*. Learn new ways to relax like yoga or massage. Help others relax, too.
It's *National Aviation Day*: see how many kinds of paper airplanes you can create!	**20** Create a *What I Want to Do* list in this month. Plan for the year ahead.	**21** Clean out the food closet or refrigerator—create meals from foods that need to be used.	**22** Go fishing and see if you can catch a catfish for *National Catfish Month*. *New Moon.*
Look around your town for things women do for a living.	**27** Make a picture on fiberboard with pressed flowers saved from July 28. 	**28**  It's *I Have a Dream Day*. Make a dream or wish booklet. Add a new idea each week. 	**29** Go for a walk with an adult near fresh water. Help clean up any litter. *Water Quality Month.*

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- Experiment with the Heat of the Sun
- Water Play All Day
- Create Some Cool Recipes
- Plan an Outdoor Fitness Program
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

by Lisa L. Durkin

Ah, summer! In early childhood summer programs, your days are not so structured and there are many opportunities for outdoor exploration and quiet contemplation. Yes—for preschoolers! This season should be full of hands-on, individualized learning.

Start by making sure that this summer will be a safe one—especially for toddlers. As Jeannine Perez says in her article: *"We need to temper their curiosity with some caution and channel their energy into safe activities."* This is especially challenging in the summer when you have to contend with the outdoor environment which is much more difficult to control and childproof than a classroom.

Jeannine gives you ideas for the classroom, the playground, and for field trips, which need be no more elaborate than a walk around the block.

Once your outdoors is safe, it's time to move out your classroom! The outside with all of its natural wonders will stimulate fascinating summer units of study. Susan Entz suggests that you use the children's curiosity as a springboard and outlines a child-centered and motivated unit on ants. She also gives ideas for outdoor learning centers created with hula hoops, lunch trays, clipboards, and buckets.

In most places, the weather is pretty hot, so it seems reasonable to use the heat for some interesting learning activities. There are science experiments, cooking experiences, and art projects in this issue, all of which take advantage of the natural summer heat.

How do you "beat the heat?" Water play, bubbles, creative movement in a sprinkler—these are just a few of the solutions you'll find in this issue of *First Teacher*. When you read a winter book such as *The Snowman*, it can lead to lots of fun and learning as you pretend to enjoy a snowy day in July.

If you have any kind of outdoor play area, you won't want to miss "Shady Places for Summer Play." Karen Stephens shows you how to create temporary shade with oversized or garden umbrellas, a sunflower house with morning glory roof in the garden, overhead trellising, and more, to keep your children out of the heat as they play.

Back inside the classroom, there are also tips for cool cooking by a new contributor, Marie Cecchini, and some equally cool places to visit on the Internet by Evie Woldman.

Finally we invite you to smell the roses and explore all the rainbow colors in nature—in other words, just appreciate the beauty of summer with your children. That's the best way we know of to beat the heat!

P.S. Please take a moment to review the brochure in this issue. It describes *Everyday TLC*, the weekly activity resource. In each monthly packet, you'll receive weekly newsletters, a reproducible parent handout, a planning calendar, and eight times a year, a learn-at-home course that can earn you continuing education credits.

Upcoming Themes:

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER:
Learning Centers

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER:
Holiday Magic

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HELPFUL HINTS

10 WAYS TO KEEP COOL

by Gail Jones

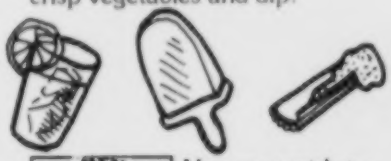
Why not create a "cool" environment in your room with blues, greens, and soft breezes by way of paper streamers or ribbons and fans available for free use?

Restock your dramatic play center with "cool" clothes such as shorts, short-sleeved shirts with tropical prints, sun dresses, hats with brims, sandals, pareos, fans, and sunglasses.

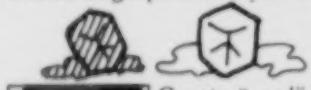
The reading center could become a travel agency with "cool" reading materials such as brochures and travel folders to "cool" places as well as stories about "cool" things such as *Just Grandma and Me* by Mercer Mayer (Golden Press) and *McElligott's Pool* by Dr. Seuss (Random House).

Speaking of sounds, use "cool" music for rest time such as ocean sounds and play cool instruments such as Hawaiian rainsticks!

Let children plan and make "cool" snacks such as lemonade, juice ice pops, and cool, crisp vegetables and dip.



You may wish to brainstorm with children all the cool art materials you can assemble and use them throughout the summer. Ice cube painting, water colors, spray painting, and chilled fingerpaint are just a few.



Create "cool" surprises such as a treasure map leading to a shady spot under a tree for sharing a story or song! Let children investigate a "cool" circle of grass to discover how many surprises they can find in it.

Sing songs that make you feel relaxed and cool. Act them out as well! What about "Did You Ever Go-a Fishing?" or "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean?"

Children will enjoy creating "cool" crafts such as fans, sun visors, and birdbaths! Wind chimes sound "cool" on a hot day!

Be sure to "Beat the Heat" by playing games and planning activities that involve cool water, shady spots, and "cool" topics such as "rain," beach," "ponds," "fountains," etc. And, don't forget those canteens and decorated water bottles to keep childrenfrom dehydrating! Have a "cool" summer!

TODDLER TIME

A SAFE SUMMER FOR TODDLERS

by Jeannine Perez

Helping toddlers grow happily and safely is like walking a tightrope between two tall buildings without looking down. We have two important goals. On the one hand, we help each toddler gain independence and self confidence. We want them to joyfully accept new foods, new activities, and new adults in their lives. On the other hand, we need to temper their curiosity with some caution and channel their energy into safe activities. Older children learn this gradually and naturally through experiences and the maturity that comes each year. (It works until they become teenagers and then again revert to the philosophy, *"I am invincible and immortal."*)

IN THE CLASSROOM

We become so accustomed to our room setup that we no longer see it. Perhaps it is time to look at your room from a new perspective. Go down to floor level and check out your classroom as each toddler sees it. You might discover a protruding nail, some sharp edges, an uncovered outlet, or some semi-empty shelves just begging to be climbed. A toddler's perception is a completely different world view.

Later tell toddlers about your adventure, and all crawl around the floor together. You might even use the experience to write a class story ("When I was as Tiny as a Mouse"). Deputize your class and ask them all to be detectives and help you find danger spots in the classroom and on the playground. Look for anything that is broken and needs repairs, objects with sharp edges, and corners in bad places.

ON THE PLAYGROUND

Playground play still needs to be well supervised. Toddlers move very quickly and are unbelievably inventive. Who else but a two year old would think to eat a bug, swim in a mud puddle, or swing out over empty space from the hand bars on the top of a slide?

To prepare for playground play, read books with children about safety, then talk about the stories and compare them to your own experiences. Practice safe play often, so that the rules and the reasons for them are familiar to children. Toddlers learn quickly to count how many children should play on a particular piece of equipment, and demonstrate good swing and slide etiquette.

ON FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are fun and also wonderful ways to teach toddlers about the outside world. Leaving their predictable and safe classroom environment is as exciting and scary as leaving their home for the first time. It's also a source of stress for the adults who are responsible for the safety of their classes. It's important to develop a field trip routine that helps smooth the trauma of new places and faces.

First, talk about and role play where you are going to go, and what you are going to do. For example, if you are visiting a farm, you can make predictions of what you expect to see, and read as many books as possible about farms. At the art table, children can draw pictures of farm animals, barns, tractors, and also of the bus that will take them to the farm. Then set up rows of chairs and practice good bus etiquette.

Second, enlist as many parents and adults as possible to accompany you, and give each adult specific instructions about your planned routine and the child or children that will be their responsibility.

Third, put together an emergency bag. It will be your security blanket. You may think of more items that are necessary for your own peace of mind, but check out the list at the top of

123 the next page.

BACKPACK FOR EMERGENCIES

The emergency bag is a backpack (to keep both hands free)

- ❑ First aid materials: Band Aids, first aid cream, and sun screen
- ❑ Some change for telephone calls or bus fares and a few dollars for any other unexpected emergencies
- ❑ Signed permission slips with each parent's telephone number
- ❑ A small (but fascinating) book to read if you need to wait
- ❑ A roll call list with the names of each child (and adult) present
- ❑ Kleenex, moist towelettes, a one-size fits all sweater, and a comb
- ❑ A non-messy snack (usually small crackers). A plastic bag with apple slices is also helpful, and helps assuage thirst pangs
- ❑ A basic emergency change of clothes
- ❑ A long rope or cord tied into knots at intervals. (You can make it a game to play. Follow the Leader with each child hanging onto a rope, and it will help you keep toddlers safe when walking).
- ❑ A clear and detailed copy of your itinerary. Document where you are going, whom you will see, and the times of arrival and departure. The original copy is left in the center office.
- ❑ A timepiece

SUMMER SAFETY PARENT BOARDS

Because summer is a time for many family vacations, try to post as many tips for safe and sane vacations as possible. (Include the above emergency bag list for them.) When first aid, or CPR classes are offered, post times on the board and stress the importance of knowing these skills. Of course, keep your own certificate current.

Parents show more interest if the bulletin board is changed often. Everyone looks for their child's art. On the board, include illustrations and take home copies of fingerplays and simple games that are children's favorites and child art. Be sure to rotate the art often so that all parents see examples of their children' work often.

SAFETY GAMES

Play games in the classroom that focus on safety. A favorite is FREEZE. There's only one rule to the game! If you say, *"Freeze!"* in a low voice, everyone freezes. Children love the game and immediately stop whatever they are doing and do not move. Tell them that you will try to trick them and begin the game without first warning them sometimes. With giggles and much concentration, children tremble while standing precariously with one foot raised; or perhaps they are caught in the act of reaching for something. They cannot move until you say, *"Go!"* FREEZE is a very simple game, but imagine the implications if one of your children runs for the street, or reaches for something dangerous.

You can also play a simple version of RED LIGHT/GREEN LIGHT. A quart milk carton topping a dowel handle, makes a great traffic light with the addition of a red, yellow, or green circle. Put one colored circle and two black ones on each side.

Everyone lines up and your traffic director turns and shows one side of the traffic light. Everyone stands still and shouts together, *"Red means stop!"* or *"Yellow means wait."* If the green circle faces them, they say, *"Green means look both ways, take someone's hand, and cross the street,"* showing that the toddlers understand by following their own directions. This game is not competitive since everyone reaches the other side of the room together.

The most exciting part of experiencing summer with toddlers is that it gives you permission to see the world through a child's eyes. You can revisit your own childhood with enthusiasm often, and always, you can ask as many questions as you wish, without being embarrassed.

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MOVE YOUR CLASSROOM OUTSIDE

by Susan Entz

Take advantage of the balmy weather to move the classroom outdoors. This requires advanced planning and a little ingenuity, but the change of scene may be just the thing to add excitement to a summer time program.

PLANNING

Involve children in every aspect of the planning. Begin by observing their current interest in nature as a starting point.

▲ Are they asking questions about the change of weather or growing beans from seeds?

▲ Have they been digging in the dirt to find worms or chasing butterflies in the field?

▲ Has a child brought in a discarded feather?

▲ Are they pretending to be a snail creeping along in its shell?

By noticing what has peaked children's curiosity, you have potential topics for investigation.

Once a theme has been selected, involve children in a discussion about that topic. Put two sheets of chart paper up. On one, list their prior knowledge about this topic; note any misconceptions. On the other, list questions or things the children would like to find out about this topic.

AN OUTDOOR UNIT ON ANTS

Things We Know About Ants

- Ants are black. *(Misconception)*
- Ants live in families. *(True. The families are called colonies.)*
- Ants have a queen. *(True)*
- Ants can bite people. *(True)*
- Ants live in an ant hill. *(Misconception. Not all ants live in ant hills.)*

Questions? Things We Want To Find Out

- Why do ants walk in line one by one?
- What do ants eat?
- Why do ants have pointy things (antennae) on the topof their heads?
- Why do they eat my sandwich on a picnic?
- How many legs does an ant have?

These two lists serve as the foundation for the outdoor activities. Identify a few key ideas that will be stressed throughout the unit with the particular group.

Suggest to the group that since you will be studying a topic that relates to nature, the group could move class outdoors. Involve them in every aspect of the move outside. Begin by moving the science center outdoors and giving children a week or two of experience working in that environment.

Before going outside, be sure that children are prepared. Help them understand that while they will be outside, they will have the same schedule and be expected to conduct themselves in the same way as they do indoors. Just because they are outside doesn't mean they can go wild.

Note: Notify parents ahead of time of the plan to move the class outside and suggest they send sun screen, hats, sunglasses, and any other protective gear they deem appropriate.

HULA HOOP SCIENCE CENTER

Ask children to find a spot in the yard where they can observe ants, and place hula hoops there. Each pair of investigators may observe the ants that are within that "ecosystem." This gives some boundaries to the outside science center.

Have children think of the materials that they will need for the observations: magnifying glasses, clip boards, paper, pencils, food. They may also

need to have sweetened water to entice the ants to come out so they can get a closer look.

Review the list of questions initially generated and formulate a single topic to be explored on the first observation. Have children go outside, do their observations, and use the clip boards to draw pictures or "make notes" about what they see.

Gather the group to review the data they collected and make a plan for the next stage of the observation.

TAKE OTHER CENTERS OUTSIDE

Once the science center has been successfully moved outdoors, move the other centers. Cover all of the same content areas you would in school, but use nature as the classroom.

Involve your children in planning the move, considering what they will need, and where they will set up the various centers. Help them to understand that appropriate school behavior is needed in their new outdoor classroom. Use beach mats, beach towels, ropes, and hula hoops to define spaces for each center. Be sure there are enough shady areas; an open tent or a large outdoor umbrella may need to be added.

▲ **Art Center** Create several easels from cardboard for painting. Attach large sheets of cardboard to the fence and clip large easel paper onto it. Lay out a long sheet of butcher paper on the sidewalk and draw the rough outline of a huge ant hill. Encourage each child to add some tunneling, different chambers, and some ants to the hill.

▲ **Lunchroom Tray Math Center** Borrow a dozen plastic trays from a school cafeteria. Set up a math "workjob" on each one, using objects rather than picture cards so the pieces won't blow away if there is a breeze.

Divide one tray in two with a piece of string and ask each child to compare which side has more plastic ants.

▲ **Clipboard Science** Set up a science exploration each day on clipboards.

▲ **Bookmobile Wagon** Load up a wagon with the fiction, nonfiction, and poetry related to the topic being explored. Pull the wagon to the outside classroom. Here are some books about ants.

▮ *Ant Cities* by Arthur Dooros (Crowell) An ant's eye view of how these tiny insects work together to maintain their colony.

▮ *Ants* by Henry Pluckrose (Glouchester Press) Clever illustrations and simple text depict life in an ant colony.

▮ *The Way of the Ant* by Kazue Mizumura (Crowell) A tale of a young ant who wants to climb as high as the blue sky and what he learns on his long journey.

▲ **Buckets of Music** Store the rhythm instruments in plastic sand buckets and place in a shady spot for individual music making outside. Play "The Ants Go Marching One by One."

▲ **Group Time** Have music, story time, and group time under the shade tree.

As part of the outdoor curriculum, be sure to explore the neighborhood. Take walks, visit local resources, and help children to notice items in their environment which will help them make sense out of the world they live in.

Outdoor classes may take time and effort to organize but result in enthusiastic children learning in and from their environment.

THINGS ARE HEATING UP!

by Sherry Burrell

When things heat up, something always happens! Young children are keen observers, and they are always quick to point out that something is happening. Their excitement is "hot," and their curiosity "boils over." When teachers set the stage, encourage observations, and help them come to some general conclusions, children learn the beginnings of the scientific method.

WHAT CAN HEAT DO?

Naturally, the first question is, *"What can heat do?"* Most young children know that heat causes fires, so it is important to be clear from the beginning of your scientific experiments that your class will explore the effects of gentle heat, not fire. Some children will already know that things get hot, that they melt, or that they bubble up. In short, children know that heat often changes things somehow. Accept all children's ideas and record them on a large chart with both words and pictures. Clarify that you'll be looking for changes in how things feel to the touch, how they look, and sometimes, how they taste. Then begin your experiments.

WHAT SOURCES OF HEAT DO WE HAVE?

Next ask children what sources of heat are available at your school or in their homes. See if children come up with the stove, the radiator, the air vents, the window sills, lamps, the sun, and many electrical appliances such as toasters, small ovens, faucets, electric blankets, even radios! Many things get warm in their world. There is one source of heat that children might not think of, and that is the human body (mammals)! Encourage them to create a collage of pictures of things that feel hot (or very warm) to the touch. Let children know what sources of heat you will use in your heat experiments. The most effective ones include the stove (used by an adult only), a lamp (carefully supervised by an adult), the human body, and the sun!

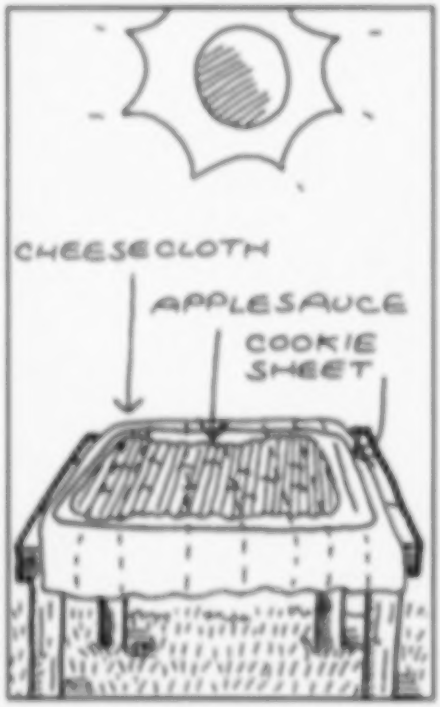
WHAT CAN BE (SAFELY) HEATED UP?

Look around the classroom or the playground, and no doubt there will be a wealth of things to heat up. Ask children to help you find things to test. Let them help you gather a wide assortment of objects. Consciously gather objects of different materials (paper, metal, food, plastic, clay, etc.). One at a time, consider what might happen if the object were (slightly) heated up. Make a simple chart (in pictures) showing the sources of heat you are planning to use, and ask children to predict what might happen if each item were exposed to that heat source. For example, present a piece of colorful paper, a banana, or a metal juice can: *"What would happen if we held it under our arm pit for a while?" "If we put it out in the sun for a few hours?" "Would it be safe to hold it under the light bulb or a lamp?" "Could we cook (boil or fry) it?"* Make a chart of predictions! Use children's words. They might suggest words such as *melt, get sticky, get icky, get mushy,* etc. Accept all their ideas, then choose the safest one to test out.

Sometimes, adults tend to think that if nothing is going to happen, then there is nothing to observe. But in science, "nothing happened" is an extremely valid observation and provides clear data! Help children to be just as excited by these kinds of observations as they are about big changes that have occurred from melting or cooking. Be sure to carefully record each observation that a child makes. Observations might be recorded on a large chart, on a clipboard (with a child's drawing), or verbally into a tape recorder.

FRUIT LEATHER

You'll Need: 6 apples ◆ cinnamon ◆ saucepan ◆ peeler ◆ cookie sheet ◆ plastic knife ◆ plastic wrap ◆ blender ◆ cheesecloth (optional)



What to Do:

1. Peel apples and slice.
2. ADULT places sliced apples in saucepan and slowly cooks until they become very thick applesauce.
3. Place warm applesauce in blender and blend until pureed. Add a pinch of cinnamon.
4. Cover cookie sheet with plastic wrap and spread very warm applesauce on it very thinly. (1/8"-1/4")
5. Set sheet outside in sun for at least a day. (It should be covered with cheesecloth to keep out bugs) OR place in 150°F oven for 8 hours.

from *Hands-On Cooking: Through the Seasons* by Kathy Faggella (First Teacher Press)

EXPERIMENTS WITH COOKING

If children want to know what would happen if something were cooked, use boiling as the first cooking method to test. Have children touch and describe the object fully before and after it has been boiled (and cooled enough to be safe). Food items are especially fun to test this way because sometimes we can eat the results! Let children choose five of their favorite snack foods to test with the cooking method. Even if you test apples, oranges, crackers, cheese, and cookies, something will be learned from each! How often do children get to see what "boiled crackers" look like? After they are cooled and strained, a few brave souls might want to taste them.

As a follow-up activity, have children go home and ask their parents to help them think of five foods they do boil and eat regularly (eggs, pasta, rice, oatmeal, vegetables, potatoes, etc.). Create a class collage of favorite boiled foods.

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts often learn how to cook an egg out on the sidewalk. Using some aluminum foil, a black sidewalk, and a very hot day, allow children to watch the process unfold! Help them understand the difference between boiling and frying. Choose a few foods to test by "frying" in the same way that you tested "boiled" foods. Sliced bananas turn out pretty tasty! "Fried bread" sounds strange to children, but they soon find that it's delicious (a lot like grilled cheese sandwiches without the cheese).

WINDOW SILL (SOLAR) EXPERIMENTS

On a sunny window sill, encourage each child to put one item out on a paper plate. Involve parents in the process by having them send something in for their child to test in this way. Be sure children predict what might happen, and be sure to supervise the observation sessions (in case metal things got pretty hot).

Even very young children already have had some experiences with heat. But before this unit, children will probably be unable to predict which materials will have which results, and they will most likely be unable to determine how much heat it will take, or how long it will take before a change occurs. After this unit, children will have more information, more experience, and more data so that their predictions (or guesses) about what might happen will become a little more "educated." "Heating things up" is a "cool" way to spend the hot summer days!

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MELTDOWN: SCIENCE AND ART

by Susan Root

Science and art may seem to be an unlikely pair, but in fact, many of the process skills in science are effective in art as well. Observing, comparing, predicting, and problem-solving are skills that can be developed through both science and art.

On these hot summer days, children can explore "melting" through science and art activities with a focus on developing important thinking skills. By charting and recording information, children also begin to make connections with the printed word and enhance their communication skills.

✎**Where Did It Go?** Place one ice cube in a baby food jar for each child. Label containers and allow children to place jars around the room and in various outdoor spots. Help children record the placement of each jar. After 30 minutes, observe the jars. What happened? Where did the ice go? Which jars melted quickly? Which melted more slowly? Children will infer that the ice melted even though they did not see it.

✎**Black or White** Children can predict which will melt faster, a ice cube on black paper or an ice cube on white paper when both are placed outside in the sun. Have children sign their names by the words *black* or *white* on a chart. After some time has elapsed, observe the results. If they try the process again, will the results be the same?

✎**Keep It** Place an ice cube in a baby food jar for each child. Ask children to problem-solve ways to keep the ice cube from melting. Provide a variety of materials such as newspaper, bubble packing, fabric and containers and let children try to "keep it" from melting. Observe in 30 minutes and record the results. What worked best?

✎**Foil Art** Let children rub crayons over foil on a warming tray. They will observe the results and communicate their observations through dictation and display of the foil art.

✎**Warm Rocks** (adapted from Scholastic *Parent and Child*) Collect a large number of smooth rocks. Set aside a few. Place the rest of the rocks on a cookie sheet and place in the oven at 200°F for about 10 minutes. Rocks should be warm, but not hot. Have each child select a rock and rub an ice cube over it. Observe what happens. Compare what happens when an ice cube is rubbed over an unheated rock. Have children color with crayons over warm rocks. Again, try this on unheated rocks and compare the results. Problem solve! Is there a way to warm rocks without using an oven. Let children plan and test their ideas.

✎**Crayon Cups** Peel wrapping off of used crayons and place an assortment in muffin tins. Place in over at 250°F until melted. Turn off oven and allow to cool in oven. Have children compare the broken crayons, the melted wax, and the new crayon cups. Compare the use of crayon cups to regular crayons.

✎**Icy Pictures** Prepare ice cube trays with a variety of different food coloring and place popsicle sticks in each cube. After they are frozen, let children paint with the ice cubes. What do they observe? What happens to the colors? What happens to the ice cubes?

By focusing on these process skills in science and art activities and by using written language and charts to record the results, children will continue to enhance their thinking and problem-solving skills all summer long.

FOREVER BLOWING BUBBLES

by Tania K. Cowling

Have fun this summer blowing bubbles with your children. It can be an educational experience as well. Reinforce concepts of high, low, big, little, many, and few. Questions lead to exploration: *"Can you blow big bubbles?" "Can you blow bubbles high in the sky?" "What shape are bubbles?"*

Discuss the fact that bubbles are formed by blowing air into a liquid and when this expands too much or touches a dense surface, the bubble will pop. When outdoors, watch bubbles' reflection from the sun. A rainbow of colors can be seen. This happens because light is broken into different colors.

For creative movement indoors, play soft music and let children pretend to be bubbles. Float gently around the classroom. Try "Be Bubble" by Hap Palmer *(Fun Activities for Toddlers)*.

Here are a few ideas for preparing your own bubble mixtures and making homemade bubble blowers to using bubbles to create unique art. (**Note:** Soapy water and even food colors are not toxic; however, please supervise young children so that they do not drink the bubble solution. Blowing into a straw is a technique young children need to master.)

BUBBLE BLOWERS:

❍ **Single straw blower** Make small slits about one inch long, around one edge of a plastic drinking straw. Bend the slits back slightly. Dip this end of the straw into the mixture and blow through the other end to form bubbles.

❍ **Paper Cup Blower** Poke multiple holes into the bottom of a paper cup. Dip this rim into the mixture. Make a giant blow into the cup and watch bubbles appear.

❍ **Multiple Straw Blower** Tape about five plastic straws together. Dip the one end into bubble solution and blow through the other end of the straws.

❍ **Egg Carton Blower** Tape on a cup from a foam egg carton. Poke a 1/4-inch hold into the bottom. Dip the cup rim into the bubble mixture and blow through the hole.

❍ **Six-Pack Bubble Blower** Dip a plastic six-pack holder into bubble solution. Blow through all six holes at once to make multiple bubbles.

❍ **Coat Hanger Bubble Wand** Untwist a wire coat hanger. Shape it into a circular wand. Twist the wires in place. Leave about four inches of straight wire for a handle. Dip this into a shallow pan of solution and blow a giant bubble.

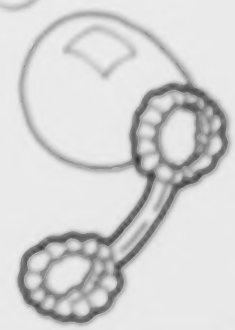
❍ **Household Items** You can make bubble blowers from common household items such as a plastic clothes hanger, a funnel, and even a frozen juice can with both end lids removed. Check the kitchen drawer and experiment with other gadgets.

BUBBLE RECIPES:

Bubbles 1: Mix 1/4 cup liquid dish detergent ◆ 1/2 cup water ◆ 1 teaspoon sugar ◆ few drops of food color (optional)

Bubbles 2: Mix 1 cup water
◆ 2 tablespoons liquid dish detergent
◆ 2 tablespoons glycerine (it strengthens the bubbles sold at drugstores)

Bubbles 3: Mix 6 cups water
◆ 2 cups Joy or Dawn detergent
◆ 3/4 cup corn syrup



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SPLISH, SPLASH, I'M ALL WET

by Barbara Fischer

Another day of unusually warm weather—hot seems more like it. To make matters worse, weather forecasters see no relief in sight. Sound familiar? Children feel the heat and so do you. What to do? Splish, splash, just get wet. Sprinkle your curriculum with water to beat the summer heat.

When the temperature soars, use the water table and wading pool as the framework of your day. Sprinkle generously with water activities and both you and your children will feel cooler. The water table will carry you through the mornings. Fill it with plastic cups, funnels, basters, a hand beater or two, a water wheel, and water. Add children and watch the learning experiences abound. Let them pour, sprinkle, squeeze, and play. Your wading pool will provide a place for "swimming," boat races, and lots of water fun. Be sure to have these water activities supervised by a teacher at all times. Now try some cool ideas during the times of your day.

STORY TIME

Among the many children's books about water, *The Sun, the Wind and the Rain* by Lisa Westberg Peters (Holt) is an excellent choice to perk up your story time. This story presents a side-by-side narration of the earth's making of a mountain. Your children will have fun making their own mountain in the sandbox. Have your water table nearby so children may use water just as Elizabeth does in the story. Encourage them to repeat her experiences to understand the part water plays in shaping our land.

Extend other books in the same way. *The Boat* by Kathy Henderson (Candlewick) is a natural for the water table or wading pool. Invite children to make their own foam boats to sail. Use straws to blow them for sailboat races.

SCIENCE TIME

Have fun discovering interesting concepts about the most common substance on Earth. What color is water? Begin by pouring water into four colored plastic cups, one red, one blue, one yellow, and one clear. Children will be able to see that water takes the color of its surroundings.

Water has weight. Ask children to carry an empty pail by the handle across the room. Ask, *"Is it heavy or light?"* Fill the pail with water and repeat the process. Did water make the pail heavier? Weigh an empty half-gallon milk carton on a food scale. How much does it weigh when filled with water?

Water has power. Use a water wheel to show children that water can make things move. Push the water in your water table to make boats "ride the waves." Pour water on sand mountains to show water's power of erosion. Don't forget water's cleaning power! Supply soap, sponges, and toys that need washing. Add children for a winning combination. Now show them how water evaporates as the toys dry in the sun.

ART TIME

Fill pails with water and give children brushes to "paint" fences, buildings, and sidewalks with water. Place dry water colors, brushes, and paper on a table. Invite children to paint, but ask them what is missing.

JUST ADD WATER

Water, of course. It's the water that makes colors come alive. Bring out the hose for another cooling idea. Spray water in the air into the sun. Rotate the spray until you discover a beautiful rainbow. What colors do you see? How does the mist from the spray feel? Find some shade, place paper around and let children paint their own rainbows.

MATH TIME

Is it a square, a triangle, or a rectangle? Place different shaped containers—some tall, some short, some round—on the floor. They should be glass or clear plastic. Fill each with the same amount of water. Encourage children to wonder why the same amount of water in each appears to be different. Some will appear almost full while others will seem almost empty. They will soon discover water takes the shape of its container.

MUSIC TIME

When you sit in an afternoon circle, ask children to pretend it's raining. Invite them to listen to the gentle sound of a rain stick. These make a great addition to your set of musical instruments. Try creating the sound of falling rain drops with another musical instrument, the xylophone. Imagine the sounds of falling rain as you read the following poem, "It's *Raining*" by Virginia S. Brown.

Splash, Splash,
Drip, drop, drip,
Outside all around.
Splatter, splatter,
Trickle, trickle—
Do you hear the sound?
Patter, patter,
Dribble, dribble,
Covering the ground.
It's raining!

Invite children to repeat the poem with you. Using glass, metal, and foil pans on the floor, fill eye droppers with water and listen to the drops fall on the pans.

For "end of the day" fun, spray water on a concrete area to produce about 1/2-inch of water. Play a music tape and invite children to dance barefoot in the water. Encourage lots of foot stomping action. The splish splashing sounds complement the sun sparkled spray.

Water works wonders when the weather heats up. Learning need not fall as the temperature rises. Cool children are eager learners and water offers many learning experiences. Just splash your way through the day.

SHIVERY SUMMER DAYS

by Barbara F. Backer

Summer's steamy, sultry, sweltering days slow you and your children to a crawl. You find yourself longing for snowy scenes, blustery breezes, and mitten weather. You'd love to be catching icy snowflakes on your hands and tongue.

Make those wishes come true. Declare one summer week as "Shivery Summer Days" and bring winter into your classroom.

❄ Begin by exploring Raymond Briggs' wordless book *The Snowman* (Random House). Encourage fanciful talk about snow people and how these icy creatures might like to move.

❄ Choose a child to stand before you in the circle. Tell children you are going to build a snow person, and their classmate is the model. While you pack on imaginary snow, place the child's body in an unconventional snowman shape—so he appears to be running, climbing, or moving in some way. While you work, sing this song:

(Tune: "Mulberry Bush")
I like to build a snow person,
Snow person, snow person.
I like to build a snow person
Who looks like THIS!

Sing the song again while you change your snow person to another position, perhaps bending to fix a "snowy" shoe.

Now, have children work in pairs with one molding the other into a snow person, while the sculptors sing the song. Take time to admire all figures, then have children switch roles so that the snow sculptor becomes the snow to be molded. Have children sing the song while they work. Encourage them to think of unique ways to pose their snow figures — sitting, playing an instrument, reading an imaginary book, etc.

❄ Put out large sheets of bulletin board paper and paints, being sure to include white paint. Invite children to create a snowy scene. When the paint dries (It may take a day or two.) hang the paper on a wall or bulletin board. Put out colored paper, white paper, glue and collage materials. Encourage children to make items to add to their wintry picture. Accept all offerings, even if they don't seem to belong. Remember that this is a fantasy. Have interested children continue to add to the scene each day.

❄ Let your group make up stories about the scene. Record these on audiotape so children can hear themselves again and again at the Listening Center.

❄ Provide plenty of newspaper and show children how to crumple sheets of paper into "snowballs." Use strips of masking tape to hold the balls closed. Some children may make larger balls by using several sheets of paper.

❄ Have children bring the balls to Circle Time. Choose four or five balls of greatly differing

sizes. Have a child arrange them from smallest to largest. Choose other balls and invite another child to have a turn. Later place all the snowballs in the empty water table for children to play with. Encourage them to remove several at a time to arrange by size.

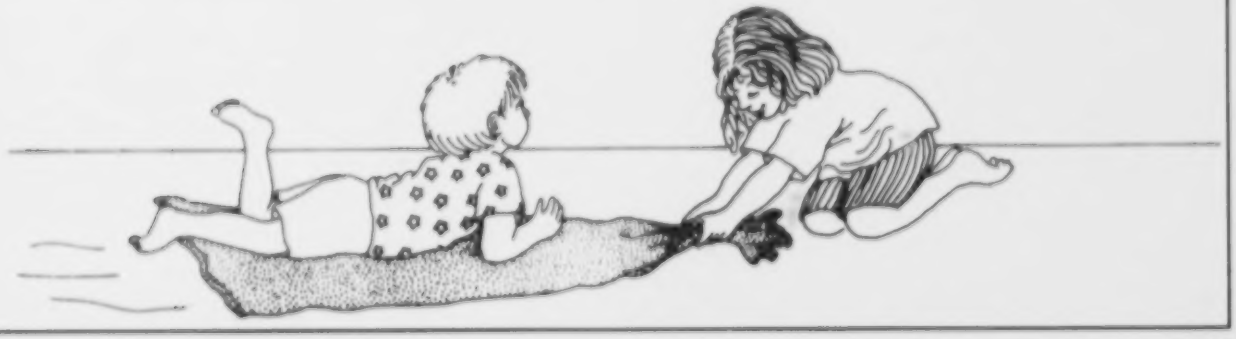
❄ Have your group fill two laundry baskets with paper snowballs. Take these outdoors and place them at opposite sides of the play yard, then let children divide into two groups for a snowball fight. Remind them to aim below the neck to prevent balls from getting play yard sand or dirt in a friend's eyes.

Continue your snowy fun with ❄door sledding. Use beach towels for the sleds. One child (the sledder) lies belly-down on a towel. A friend (the puller) stands at the towel's edge nearest the sledder's head, facing the sledder. The puller holds two corners of the towel and, walking backwards, pulls the sledder along a uncarpeted floor. Then have children change places. If you have real sleds, allow children to push and pull each other across the sandy area of your play yard.

❄ This physical activity will leave your snow birds with hearty appetites. Let them use a melon baller to scoop out small balls of vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt. Have each child place two or three of these "snowballs" in a dish or paper cup then sprinkle on a small amount of cocoa powder. Put the cocoa into a salt shaker for easy sprinkling. Children will enjoy eating this snowy snack. If desired, serve with ice water.

❄ Combine ice and color mixing for a scientifically cool activity. Offer children many clear plastic cups to fill halfway with water. Let them experiment with color mixing by adding drops of food coloring to each cup. Encourage children to make pale colors as well as dark ones. Place the cups in the freezer overnight. The next day have children unmold the colored ices and place them in the water table. Add a few inches of water and let children enjoy playing in the frozen concoction. Have them observe what happens to the water as the ice melts. Supervise this activity carefully so children leave before their hands become too cold.

❄ For more shivery fun, pull out some of the activities and stories you usually use in January and February. Play mitten matching games. Fold paper and cut it into snowflakes to hang from the ceiling. Make modeling dough with no added color so children can fashion snow people and snowy animals. Add cotton balls to your collage materials. Read books about sparkling, snowy days. Pretty soon you and your children will be shivering in your shoes and forgetting about the summer's horrendous heat and humidity.



WATER PLAY TRICKS AND TREATS

by Kathleen Koons

On Water Day, set up a water sprinkler on a level, grassy area where children can run through it safely. They may wear old tennis or pool shoes to protect their feet. If a water sprinkler is not available, an adult can hold a hose for the children to go through. Direct children to go through the sprinkler by lining up and performing one at a time in the following ways.

- *Walk.*
- *Walk backwards.*
- *Walk fast. Slowly.*
- *Gallop.*
- *Tiptoe.*
- *Crawl.*
- *Hop on one foot.*
- *Hop on two feet.*
- *Walk sideways.*
- *March.*
- *Walk through the sprinkler with your hands on your head. Shoulders. Waist. Knees. Ears. Elbows. Mouth. Back. Chin. Thighs. Nose. Neck. Chest. Give yourself a hug as you walk.*
- *Pretend you are an elephant going through the sprinkler. A horse. Rabbit. Lion. Cat. Dog. Mouse. Duck. Bear. Cow. Snake. Fish. Bird. Penguin. Frog.*

When you are finished performing your tricks through the sprinkler, enjoy drinking a refreshing treat.

STRAWBERRY SMOOTHIE (MAKES 4 CUPS)

What You'll Need: 1 pint fresh strawberries, cleaned and hulled (frozen strawberries can be used) ◆ 1 ripe banana ◆ 1/2 cup orange juice ◆ 2 Tablespoons honey ◆ 1 cup ice cubes

What to Do:

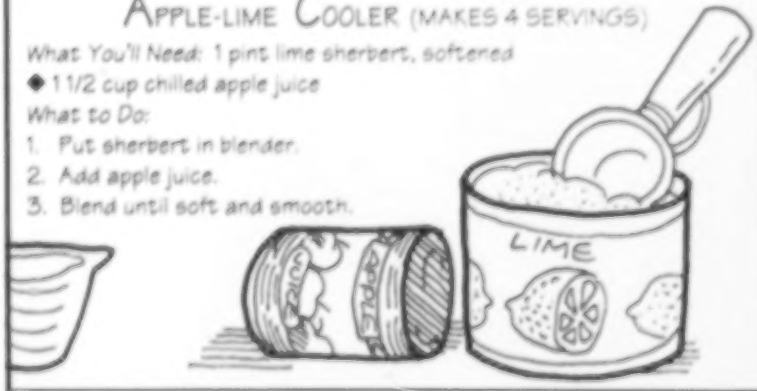
1. Put ice cubes and orange juice in a blender and blend.
2. Add banana, strawberries, and honey. Blend until smooth.

APPLE-LIME COOLER (MAKES 4 SERVINGS)

What You'll Need: 1 pint lime sherbert, softened ◆ 1 1/2 cup chilled apple juice

What to Do:

1. Put sherbert in blender.
2. Add apple juice.
3. Blend until soft and smooth.



PINEAPPLE FLOAT (MAKES 5-6 QUARTS)

What You'll Need: 2 packages of powdered drink mix ◆ 2 cups sugar ◆ 8 cups water ◆ 46 ounces pineapple juice ◆ 1 quart ginger ale

What to Do:

Mix together and serve over ice.

Shady Places for Summer Play

by Karen Stephens

Summer gives children the chance to explore the great outdoors! But summertime outdoor play can put children at a health risk. Overexposure to the sun's rays, limited water intake, and overexertion can all play a part in children succumbing to heat stroke.

To make sure children don't overdue it in the sun, provide shady places to play. By creating small nooks and crannies to play in, you'll shield children from overexposure to the sun's damaging ultraviolet rays. And you'll be providing a balance to boisterous play. Nooks and crannies allow for quieter play while letting children enjoy the great outdoors! Art, dramatic play, table toys, puppets, music and even building blocks and Legos ™ can be moved outside.

Following are ways to create play spaces in your play yard. The ideas range from small additions that can be added on a rotation basis to permanent landscape installations. Combine the approaches and you'll have peace of mind as your class explores their outdoor classroom.

Temporary Shade

- Cover a picnic table with sheets. Children can blow bubbles underneath them!
- Place a tent outside for puppet play, reading, or art. A doll house can be set up inside a tent. Provide camping materials and the tent can become an outdoor dramatic play center.
- String a clothesline between two poles. Drape a sheet over it, stretch the sheet out and secure all four corners of the sheet to the ground. You'll have a tent with open ends creating a shady space for card games. Or for the more adventurous, the sheet can create a tunnel for big wheels to drive through.
- Obtain a refrigerator or washing machine shipping box from a local appliance distributor. Create a door for entry and cut out ample windows inside for adequate air circulation.
- Provide oversized umbrellas. These can be propped on the ground and rotated as the sun moves to provide shade for miniature toy play. For instance, a large umbrella can cover a shady place for farm toy play. (Note: These aren't handy on windy days.)
- Provide garden umbrellas over picnic tables. Adult-sized picnic tables may have a hole in the middle for placing an umbrella. Freestanding umbrellas are also available from garden stores. However, freestanding umbrellas must be heavily weighted in the ground to be secure; otherwise the wind will whisk them away!
- Drape your round parachute from tree branches or poles. The same parachute you use for large motor games can do double duty by creating some colorful shade outdoors. Clothespins or string can be used to drape the parachute as a canopy for grassy play.

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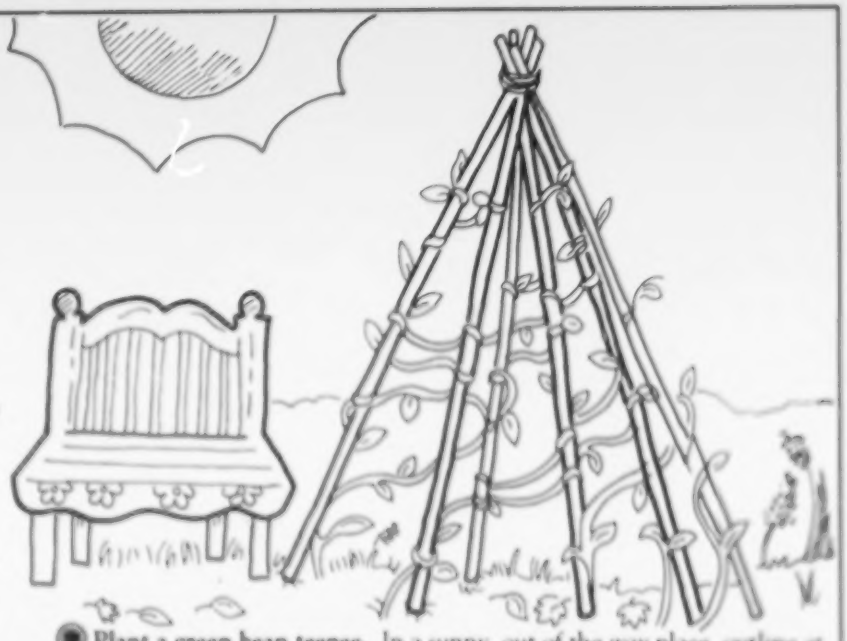
Landscaping & Gardening

● **Plant a sunflower house with a morning glory roof!** Buy seed packets of morning glories and sunflower seeds. (Be sure to select sunflowers that will grow at least twice as tall as your children.) Outline at least a 6-by-9 foot rectangle of your sod, leaving a 2-foot doorway that won't be planted. Remove about 4 inches of sod from around the rectangle. Have children plant seeds along the rectangle, alternating sunflower and morning glory seeds. With time, warm days and daily watering, the sunflower seeds will provide a wall for the morning glories to climb. The glories will then climb across the top of the sunflowers for a sky-blue roof. (It's going to be hard to get kids to leave this charming playhouse!)

● **Berm it.** Create little hills in your play yard. If they run east to west, the north side of the berm will be shady when summer sun is on the south side. (And a small slope is heavenly to lay back on while gazing at the shimmering underside of leaves!)



Plant a vining vegetable arbor In the plumbing section of the hardware store, purchase five or more, 10-to-12 foot lengths of plastic, bendable 1-inch tubing. Select a sunny spot and dig up an 8-by-8 foot space. Line the 5 tubes next to each other, a foot apart. Bow each tube. Secure each end of each tube into the ground within your chosen space. This will create a tunnel of arced tubing. (Make sure each end of tubing is secure in the ground so an end doesn't pop up!) So vines can climb across the tunnel, drape nylon netting over the tubing, or weave string, from end to end, across the width of the tunnel. Place mulch inside the arbor to avoid mud holes! Baby pumpkins, cucumbers, squash, or gourds can be planted along the arbor's outside walls. The vining tendrils will tickle cheeks and tantalize imaginations as children climb in their vegetable arbor.

Plant a green bean teepee. In a sunny, out of the way place, outline at least a 6-foot circle on your sod. Along the circle, dig up a 4 inch width of sod so seeds can be planted into dirt. At an angle, leaning in, stake 6 bamboo or other sturdy sticks into the ground along the 6 foot circle you dug up. From the top, pull the stacks to the center and tie together with twine. So seedling vines have something to grow on, weave heavy string or twine all around the teepee. Plant the seeds (with the children, of course!) and watch as Mother Nature puts on her show. Beans that are vigorous climbers and mature quickly include scarlet runner and purple hyacinth. Their flowers will give children a delightful surprise and the beans can be picked, then eaten at the dinner table!

Plant shade trees, especially maples! Even small maples purchased for under $100 will provide some shade their first summer.

Plant a weeping tree! Weeping varieties include willow, cherry, or mulberry. They provide delightful under-the-canopy play. The breezes shifting through the arced, trailing branches will add to the coziness and mystery!

Plant crab-apple trees for great climbers. And they provide shade while children are perched for a bird's eye view of the world!

Hang netting from an overhang to create a private, shady place. Netting, often used by orchards to keep deer from eating their delicious apples, is sold at garden and hardware stores. Purchase enough netting to drape to the ground from your overhang. At the netting's drip line, plant a row of vine seeds that will cover the netting creating a colorful wall. Morning glories and nasturtiums are good candidates for all summer.

Plant a bower of lilac bushes. This works if you have a lot of sunny space. Plant a horseshoe or even circle of lilacs. In a few years, they'll begin to fill in providing a shady place so kids can nestle into friendships.

Landscape Architecture

- **Arbors** Arbors can be purchased or homemade by a skilled carpenter. Willow arbors are rustic and sturdy. Cedar arbors are more formal and costly, but they last and last requiring little care.
- **Gazebos** With built-in benches, gazebos can be used for story time, storytelling, tea parties and art projects. If the climate requires it, gazebos can be installed with screens to keep the mosquitoes out!
- **Tree Houses** Our program built a 12 foot x 12 foot tree house in our play yard. Just four feet off the ground, the covered play space allows for all types of play. And the built-in slide allows for exit with a flourish!
- **Child-Sized Log Cabin or Play House** Dramatic play is an obvious past-time in this shaded space. But play dough or finger-painting could just as easily take place.
- **Awning** Cloth awnings can be placed over concrete patios for dependable shade. Water tables and woodworking benches work well in such places. (And when awnings are placed outside a window, they can reduce indoor glare and cooling costs!)
- **Overhead Trellising** Sandboxes can be dappled with shade by building overhead wooden trellises. Sometimes called latticework, the overhead trellis is supported by 4 foot x 4 foot vertical, pressure-treated pine (or something of similar strength.) Vines can grow over the trellis for added interest. Both trumpet and honeysuckle vines grow in full sun. And of course, wisteria love sun, but its heavy, woody vines need strong support. (Wisteria is the gorgeous purplish-pink flowering vine that drips from the famous Japanese bridge at Monet's garden in Giverney, France!)

BUTTERFLY FAN

YOU'LL NEED:

tape

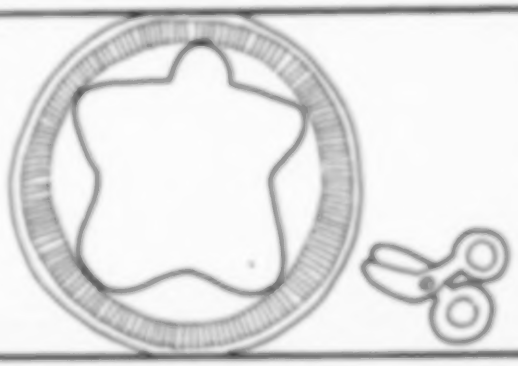
2 craft (or popsicle stick)

scissors

crayons

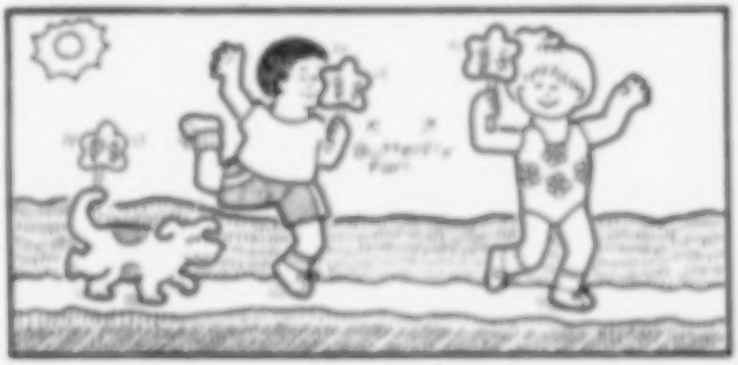
felt tip markers

WHAT TO DO:



1. Cut a butterfly shape from a paper plate

2. Decorate butterfly shape



3. Using tape attach butterfly to craft stick

from *Crayons, Crafts, and Concepts* by Kathy Faggella (First Teacher Press)

PARENT TIPS

WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE

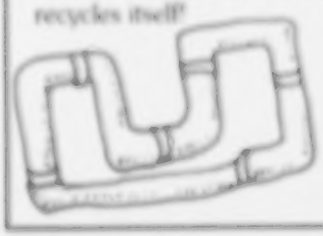
by Gail P. Jones

For as long as people have walked on Earth, they have been fascinated with water! From a simple drip to the torrential flood, water still fascinates as well as cools us all! Beat the heat with some of these fun ideas with water!

(The activity ideas listed below for water fun could be copied and sent home for parents to use with their children.)

Provide your child (or family) with straws and a container of water. Challenge them to sip up some water without swallowing it and holding the mouth end of the straw with an index finger, releasing the water to form a letter, number or symbol on a dry surface.

Create a maze with plastic PVC pipes and capture the water flow in a basin or construct it so that it recycles itself!



Have a water tea party with your friends outside where spilling won't be problem. Even toddlers will have a ball!

Declare one day a week Doll Washing Day or Bike Washing Day or Toy Washing Day! Let children wash doll clothes and hang them up !

Water paint the alphabet on a blacktop surface or sidewalk on a hot day. See if you can get from A to Z before any letter evaporates!

Play the same type game with numbers one to ten....see if you can water paint the numbers and jump on them in order before they evaporate!

Make music with water glasses filled with varying amounts of liquid. With adult supervision, let a child tap each glass with a metal teaspoon. Arrange the glasses in order and play a tune!

Paint your own water wash backgrounds to use for stationary or backgrounds for paintings on another day.

9 If it's really hot, put on the bathing suits and give each child her own foam ball and bucket of water and let the fun begin! Sing songs such as "This is the way we wet our heads, wet our head, etc."

10 Another fun water activity in your bathing suits is creating mini-showers with assorted plastic containers through which holes have been punched. Recycle the water by standing in a tub!

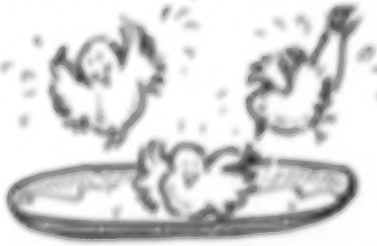
11 Don't forget to create a slippery slide on a hill with an old shower curtain and a running hose!

12 Give each child a set of clear, plastic cups, water, and food coloring. Let them see how many color blends they can create! Put some celery stalks or Queen Anne's Lace flowers in the water and watch the leaves turn color overnight!

13 Teach your children words such as empty, full overflowing, moist, dry, etc. while the water is out! This is much more fun when you set up a pretend soda fountain in the backyard!

14 Help develop strong muscles for writing and printing with water activities such as using a turkey baster to transfer an estimated number of squirts to fill a bucket! Encourage children to water flowers with the baster and a watering can.

15 Everyone loves making mud pies! Use the hot weather for some mud pie fun.... Use muffin tins, pie pans and cookie cutters... The whole family can have fun!



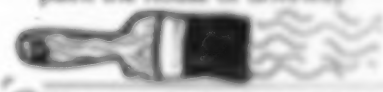
16 Make a birdbath for the birds. Watch them quietly and keep it filled with fresh water.

17 Decorate a used plastic juice bottle with a screw-on lid for a summer canteen to keep your children "hydrated" while playing outside.

18 Make rainbows with a hose in the sun, or do sink-and-float experiments with assorted objects and see if the children can create a play dough boat that floats for some summer science!

19 Play "Jack and Jill went up the hill" with buckets of water and a "well" at the top of the hill. Your youngsters will squeal with delight as they roll down the hill and water the grass!

20 Give your children large paintbrushes or rollers and a bucket of water to paint the house or driveway!



Water can be buckets of fun if used in the right place at the right time.... Have a cool summer!

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COOL COOKING CREATIONS

by Marie E. Cecchini

It's sunny, it's hot, and, due to longer daylight hours, half of your children are moody and tired because of later bedtimes. The other half, the bop-till-you-droppers, seem oblivious to the heat while rivers of perspiration stream down their smudged faces. As a teacher, you know that somewhere in between, there lies a happy medium—a place where both groups can come together and enjoy the milder, yet productive, activities that summer heat demands.

As a step in the right direction, try having children prepare cool, nutritious snacks. Many no-cook recipes are available to involve your youngsters in food preparation activities. These recipes allow children to develop such fine motor skills as cutting and molding, and many require the use of math skills, such as counting and measuring. Snack preparation also involves children in making a cooperative effort, learning to follow directions, and discovering the importance of sequence.

This summer, experiment with some new and exciting recipes that will help your youngsters beat the heat.

RECIPES TO BUILD

Many recipes for children involve them in the creation of something familiar, using a variety of foods. Start with the recipes below, then invite children to create a few of their own.

FRUIT BUNNY

What You'll Need: lettuce leaf ● cottage cheese ● pear half ● banana ● raisins

What to Do:

1. Set the lettuce leaf on a plate; top with the pear half, flat side down, narrow end at the top.
2. Gently place three raisins into the top of the pear for eyes and a nose.
3. Set a small mound of cottage cheese to the side of the bottom of the pear for the tail.
4. To make ears, cut the banana in half, then slice one half lengthwise into quarters. Set two of these quarters at the top of the pear.

BABY MOUSE

What You'll Need: lettuce leaf ● blueberries ● cottage cheese ● strawberry half ● sliced celery ● carrot curl

What to Do:

1. Set the lettuce on a plate. Top with a mound of cottage cheese.
2. Set the strawberry half into one side for a nose. Then place blueberries above the nose for eyes.
3. Insert two celery slices above the eyes for ears. Add a carrot curl tail.

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Recipes to Mix

There are also recipes available that require very little or no cooking, yet provide children with experiences in measurement, mixing, and observing chemical changes.

STRAWBERRY-BANANA POPS

What You'll Need: 1 (3 oz.) package instant banana pudding mix ● 2 c. milk ● fresh strawberries ● popsicle sticks

What to Do:

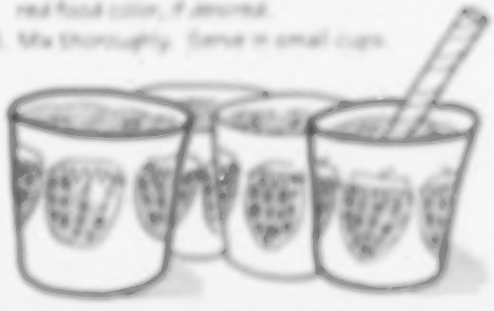
1. Wash the strawberries and cut them into chunks.
2. Insert a popsicle stick into each chunk.
3. Set the strawberry pieces into an empty ice cube tray.
4. Combine the remaining ingredients in a bowl and mix well with a wire whisk. Pour the mixture over the strawberries, then freeze the pops. (Note: A blender can be substituted for the bowl and whisk.)

STRAWBERRY MILK

What You'll Need: 4 c. milk ● 1/3 c. strawberry jam ● red food color (optional)

What to Do:

1. Pour the milk into a blender container.
2. Add the strawberry jam and a few drops of red food color, if desired.
3. Mix thoroughly. Serve in small cups.



SUNNY DAY PIE

This recipe is a little more involved, but very exciting. You may choose to have one group of children make the first part, and another group make the second. Combined, they will have a delightful treat. Now that's cooperation!

What You'll Need: 1 (3 oz.) package lemon gelatin ● 2 bananas, sliced ● 3/4 c. mini-marshmallows ● 1/3 c. sugar ● 2 c. crushed pineapple ● 1 beaten egg ● 1/2 c. whipped cream (Note: Whipped cream can be dairy or non-dairy.) ● 1 tsp. flour ● 1 c. water ● pie plate

What to Do:

1. Dissolve the gelatin in one cup boiling water.
2. Add the mini-marshmallows, stirring until they dissolve.
3. Pour the mixture into a pie plate.
4. While the mixture cools, drain the pineapple, reserving the juice, then combine the pineapple with the banana slices. Set aside.
5. Next, combine the reserved pineapple juice with the sugar, beaten egg, and flour.
6. Cook and stir over medium heat until the mixture thickens, then remove from heat. Set aside to cool.
7. Add the fruit to the cooled gelatin pie. When the juice mixture has cooled, stir in your choice of whipped cream. Mix well, then spread over the top of the gelatin pie.

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SURF'S UP—VISIT THE INTERNET!

by Evelyn J. Woldman

Take time this summer to "surf the Web" if you have access to a computer with a modem. (You can find these at your local library.) There are many interesting places to visit that contain interesting information—and practical suggestions for activities—just a few keystrokes away. Start with some of the ones suggested below, but then type *early childhood education* or *preschool* or *young children* into your search engine to see where it takes you.

NAEYC URL: **http://www.naeyc.org**
This is the home page for the National Association for the Education of Young Children. It provides many links to resources, written materials, and other related organizations dealing with early childhood education.

EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCES

URL: **http://www.earlychildhood.com**
This is a forum for all kinds of news about early childhood education. The site includes resources, links, articles, and materials for teaching. There is even a section on how to create classroom supplies, such as stickers, t-shirts, and paperweights.

URL: **http://www.kconnect.com**
This site is devoted entirely to kindergarten lesson plans, reviews of resources and books. There is also a wonderful teacher tip section and an art page with lots of craft ideas.

URL: **http://members.aol.com/eactchrday/index.html**
This site contains some of the richest and most updated education information on preschools. There are lots of learning centers including an area detailing gift making, and a play area with a fast food restaurant. Other sections include snack ideas, free stuff for teachers, and lots more!

URL: **http://www.ecls.org/research.html**
This site provides lots of links to search engines that are easily usable by young children. Some of the engines have automatic filtering systems for inappropriate material. Search tools include *Yahooligans*, a very popular children's site.

URL: **http://www.nauticomm.net/www/cokids/index.html**
This site provides an index of the most up-to-date, excellent elementary sites. It also includes teacher-created lessons, parent pages, and a listing of Internet web sites.

URL: **http://www.ume.maine.edu/~coled/ecoolwelcome.html**
This is a great starting point for teachers, parents, and caregivers of young children. The site collects links to other sites and categorizes them for easier use.

URL: **http://www.puppetools.com**
This site contains comprehensive guide to puppet-making with lots of ideas on using puppets in an elementary classroom setting section, with t-shirts, caps, etc. for sale!?

URL: **http://www.firstteacher.com**
This is our site! Come visit us and find sample articles, great ideas, and a look at our sister publication *Everyday TLC*!

FRUIT KABOBS

You'll Need: fresh fruits such as apples, strawberries, melon, and bananas; plastic straws

What to Do:

1. *Adult peels and slices fruits.*

2. *Adult places sliced and whole fruits out on a cloth for children. Demonstrate how each fruit can be pushed onto the straw. Discuss that kabobs can be made into patterns.*

3. *Have child place six to eight pieces of fruit on straws in repetitive patterns they choose.* Young children should use only two types of fruit.

Apple, Strawberry, Apple, Strawberry, Apple, Strawberry

from http://www.firstteacher.com

IN THE

COOL OFF WITH PICTURE BOOKS

by Paula J. Sitarz

Introduce children to a variety of ways to "beat the heat" by sharing these picture books with them.

In *D. W. All Wet* by Marc Brown (Little, Brown), young D. W. complains that she doesn't like the beach. Her brother Arthur takes D. W. for a walk on his shoulders. When he drops her in the water, D. W. discovers that she loves to dip, float, flip, splash, and dunk.

A grandmother and granddaughter in *Hotter Than a Hot Dog!* by Stephanie Calmenson (Little, Brown) discuss how hot they are in the city on a summer day. The two fan each other, listen to cranky people, and then decide to take the train to the beach. They cool off by making beds in the sand, swimming, collecting shells, eating ice cream cones, reading a book set in the North Pole, and building a sand castle. When they return home, they're cooled by an evening breeze.

In *One Hot Summer Day* (Greenwillow), Nina Crews uses a unique style of art consisting of collages made from color photographs. Young children relate to the art and to the concise, poetic text. They'll feel the heat of summer in the city. Children will see people cooling off by using umbrellas for shade, enjoying the gush of water from an open hydrant, making a fan out of a newspaper, eating popsicles, catching rain on their tongues, and swinging at the playground.

In *A Beach Day* (Greenwillow) Douglas Florian combines simple crayon and watercolor illustrations with a brief rhyming text to show how people cool off at the beach. They splash in the water, fly kites, collect shells, and eat ice cream.

Douglas Florian also uses child-like illustrations and a brief rhyming text in *A Summer Day* (Greenwillow). It's a short, sweet, and satisfying story in which a family takes a trip to the country to cool off. They swim, fish, and enjoy the sunset.

In *Amy Loves the Sun* (Harper & Row) by Lillian Hoban, the colorful illustrations impart a warm feeling. Youngsters see Amy running through the grass with bare feet, picking flowers, and observing insects.

In Jonathan London's book, *Froggy Learns to Swim* (Viking) Froggy's parents are swimming in the pond and encouraging him to swim, but he decides to swing because he doesn't think he can swim. Froggy swings so high he plops into the pond. He thinks he's drowning although his mother assures him that frogs are born swimmers. Froggy's mother tries to teach him to swim. Froggy thinks he'll do better with his flippers, his mask, and snorkel. He dives into the pond and swims so well that he doesn't want to stop.

In *Beach Days* (Viking Kestrel), Ken Robbins uses unique photographs and a simple poetic text to show how people can beat the heat. Youngsters will enjoy seeing people surf, float on inner tubes, toss a beach ball, fly kites, build sand castles, dig in the sand, eat ice cream, run, wind surf, and ride the waves.

A young girl enjoys her day *At the Beach* in the book by Anne and Harlow Rockwell (MacMillan). She swims, follows sandpipers, finds seaweed, observes fish swimming, and feels a crab tweak her toe.

In *The Pig in the Pond* (Candlewick Press) by Martin Waddell, Nelligan's pig sits by the pond getting hotter and hotter, watching the ducks and geese in the cool water, and not jumping in because pigs don't swim. Finally the pig can't stand the heat and she jumps into the pond with a tremendous splash that sends the ducks and geese flying. Word spreads to the other animals who come to see. Nelligan returns, sees the pig, takes off his clothes, and joins the pig in the pond. So do the other animals.

STILL IN THE

SUMMER READING LIST

by Sandra L. Malcolm

Encourage your children to talk about their favorite summer fun times. The books found *In the Book Corner* present a variety of summer activities from beaches to treehouses. Summer is a good time to sit in the shade and read.

IN MY TREEHOUSE

by Alice Schertle (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard) helps children vividly imagine the joys of having a treehouse with wonderful descriptions and illustrations.

BEFORE READING, show children the book and read the title aloud. Ask children what kinds of things they think they might be able to do in a treehouse. Ask if anyone has ever been in a treehouse. Encourage them to tell about it.

AFTER READING, talk about what happened in the treehouse and compare this with children's thoughts. Observe that sometimes we just want to be by ourselves. Ask children if they can think of a time when they wish they would had a treehouse to go to to be by themselves.

ACTIVITIES

◆ Place a large tree on the wall of the room. Have children draw a picture of a treehouse they would like to have. Have them cut out their treehouse and tape it to the tree on the wall. Now each child has her own treehouse.

◆ Encourage children to "write" or dictate a story about their treehouse. Display these, also.

◆ Create a "treehouse" in the classroom. This can be in a loft or a special secluded area of the room. This area can be used by individual children when they want to be alone.

JULY

by James Stevenson (Greenwillow) tells the story of an older man and the things he remembers from vacationing at his Grandpa and Grandma's house at at the beach in the month of July.

BEFORE READING, ask children how many have been to the beach for summer vacation. Allow time to hear about their experiences. What kind of things are there to do at the beach, besides swimming? What colors did they see at the beach? Where did they see those colors?

AFTER READING, ask, *"Who did the children go to visit at the beach?" "What kind of people did the children meet at the beach?" "What activities did they do at the beach?" "Were they the same or different than the ones we talked about before the story? How?" "What did children in the story do at the beach that was unsafe?" "Why?"*

ACTIVITIES

◆ Review the months of the year. Discuss what type of weather you experience during each month where you live.

◆ Write a class book or individual beach experience stories. Have children illustrate them, emphasizing the colors and activities.

◆ Create a "beach" in your classroom. Have a day at the beach in your classroom. Include sand activities, water play, beach umbrellas, beach balls, etc. Have children wear T-shirts or bathing suits to school that day. Sit on beach towels to have snack and to read stories.

◆ Talk about summer safety. How do we keep ourselves safe and healthy in the summer?

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HOME FIELD

by David Spohn (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard) portrays the joys of a baseball game just between Matt and his father.

BEFORE READING, bring a baseball glove, a bat, and a ball to share with children. Give them time to talk about their experiences with these items. Talk about the various places in which baseball can be played (ball field, backyard, street). Then sing the song "Take Me Out to the Ball Game."

AFTER READING, ask *"Why was Matt excited when he woke up?" "What kind of day was it?" "Who did Matt get to play baseball with him?" "What kind of a ball field did matt and father play on?" "Who were the fans and how did they react when Matt hit the long fly ball at the end of the story?"*

ACTIVITIES

- Discuss how to play baseball. Introduce children to the terms used in the sport and the rules of the game. Begin a discussion on the importance of following rules and on good sportsmanship.
- Go outside and play a game with teams and a ball. Instead of baseball, this could be kickball.
- Show children how the win/lose record of sports teams are recorded. Bring in sample newspapers with that information. Keep track of several teams by graphing their records.

Watch the differences in the win/lose records for home games vs. on-the-road games. See if there is "home field advantage" for the team you are following.

SEA SHAPES

by Suse MacDonald (Gulliver Books, Harcourt Brace) is a delightfully illustrated concept book in which shapes found in the sea are used to represent geometric shapes.

BEFORE READING, discuss geometric shapes (using ones that will be found in the story). Have children tell all they know about each shape. Ask children who have been to the beach if any of these shapes were seen at the beach that they visited. Where?

AFTER READING, look again at the illustrations Suse MacDonald used. How did she create the pictures? What shape did she use to create the starfish? The sea turtle? Ask children if they can name other places in nature that they can see these shapes.

ACTIVITIES

- Discuss with children the shapes found in nature. (For example, an evergreen tree may look like a triangle.) Give each child a cutout shape. Go on a walk, having them look for things outside that look like their shape. Write on their cutout shape what they tell you that they saw.
- Using MacDonald's art style, make a class Nature Shapes book based on what children saw on the walk.
- Have each child choose an animal that reminds her of a shape. Create the animal out of shapes. Display on an Animal Shapes bulletin board.

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OUTDOOR FITNESS

by Margery A. Kranyik

One and two and three and four.
Everybody at the door.
Five and six and seven and eight.
Let's make sure our line is straight.

Outdoor fitness is more than the enjoyment of just being outdoors. Little or no equipment is needed, just your desire to instill the love for physical activity in children. Most of the exercises described below use motions with which children are familiar. Match children who have special needs with a peer helper who will help them adapt the activity.

Before you do any exercise or movement activities with children, take time to explore what our various body parts can do. Have children stretch their arms over their head, out in front of them, out to the sides. *"Look at what our legs can do! They take us from place to place."* Ask questions such as *"What parts of our legs bend?" (ankles, knees)* Review vocabulary associated with leg movement: *hop, jump, run, skip, slide.* Talk about the waist and have children bend and rotate from side to side. Now you are ready to move to a large motor area or the outdoors.

STRETCH AND WARM UP

All exercise programs need a stretch and warm-up period. Have children run or march in place for a count of twenty. To warm up arms, ask them to stretch high above their heads, out to the sides, and in front. Keep all movement gentle and watch that children are not overextending. At ages four or five, it is important for young children to think they are strong. Supervise all movement carefully.

- Children love to run. Designate a space in your play area where children can run. At a given signal (usually a whistle), allow them to run at their own pace around the area at least once. Given individual differences, speed is not important. Everyone can run at their own pace. Make up a story as they run to help maintain focus. Two toots on your whistle can be the signal to stop. Have children change from a run to a skip or gallop and even change direction. Praise work well done. Encourage those who may have difficulty and stop before anyone becomes frustrated. Remember that all children do not like physical activity and starting at an early age is meant to help develop p sitive attitudes.
- Have some relay races with children lined up in two lines. Some races can include running, but others should include hopping, jumping, and skipping. Help develop balance by having children run with plastic or paper cups filled with water. As children become more adept at with this activity, have them run relay races with water-filled cups. None of the relays have to have winners. Each can be run against the clock or a timer with each child striving for personal achievement.
- Promote the power of walking. Take daily nature walks or sensory walks. Listen for sounds around the school, the play area, the street or the woods and field. Walk to determine what children can see, smell and even touch. Encourage children to take walks at home with their families. At Parent's Open House, talk about your fitness focus and encourage families to extend what you are doing into their home environment.
- Make or purchase beanbags to help with upper body stretching. Having an object in hand helps to maintain focus without adding weight. Ask children to stretch up over their heads with both arms and back down to their shoulders to the count of ten. Then alternate arms as they stretch to the sky. Keep

count up to ten. Additional upper body exercises can include pushing arms out to the side and back and out in front and back. Ask family members or local merchants for help with the purchase of beanbags, or donations, if necessary.

- Help children with balance using masking tape attached to your blacktop surface or with string laid out on the grassy surface. Children can play tightrope walker placing one foot in front of the other, heel to toe. Have them repeat, walking backwards, crawling, or skipping. If you have a balance beam, be sure to take it outdoors during the warmer months. Children can practice jumping over it, too.
- Fill a plastic wading pool with water. Have children jump and hop in and out using two feet and then one foot. Ask them to run in place in the water as you count or beat patterns on a drum. Allow time for fun and splashing after you have had some fitness activities.
- Create a simple obstacle course. Ask family help to obtain a tire and a ladder. Place these objects in your outdoor area along with your balance beam, a plastic tub or waste basket, or any other appropriate objects from your classroom. Devise a pattern where children can run around, through, over, and backwards with each obstacle. Use natural objects such as trees and the sand area to extend the challenge.

Ask other teachers for input in providing new fitness activities. Their aerobics instructors may have additional suggestions for enhancing fitness in your program. Although these activities are suggested for outdoor use, most can be adapted for indoor use on successive rainy days and when snow covers your play area!

RAINBOWS AND ROSES

by Jeannine Perez

Ah, the possibilities of summer! Working and playing outdoors in summer is like teaching and learning in a wonderful classroom. The sky is our ceiling, and we have no walls or boundaries. Every experience motivates and inspires children to learn more about the art and science of nature.

WALK IN BEAUTY

Use daily walks as learning experiences for your children, and help them practice observation skills and awareness of the environment.

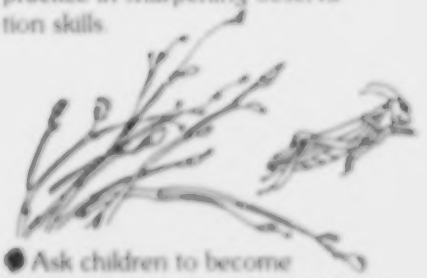
● Make a giant list of all nature treasures you can find. Add to it daily, trying to find as many treasures as possible. Our treasure list soon grew to the top of all the door frames and eventually touched the ceiling. A butterfly, crawling insect, a bird in flight, a cat stretching, flowers, a nest; even the shape of a tree or a shadow counts. Each is a treasure. Sharp observation skills develop when we take time to look at the world around us with clear eyes. It becomes too easy to look around without really seeing.

● Rainbow walks are fun. Prepare for the walk by making rainbow cards in the classroom. Help each child paint a small semicircle of yellow in the center of an index card. Direct children to make an orange arch over the yellow one, then proceed with red, purple/violet, blue, and green arches, one on top of the other.

On your next walk, ask children to take along their rainbow cards and look hard to find all the colors of the rainbow in nature.

● Next, plan a listening walk. It doesn't have to be a long walk, but warn children that they may use only their ears (not their voices), and that they are to try to remember every sound they hear. When you return from your listening walk, list all the sounds you remember, and then make a simple graph of the sounds you heard more than once. Perhaps everyone heard an airplane, and many noticed muted traffic sounds. A few might have heard an insect. Becoming aware of nature with all of the senses is an evolving skill. Repeating this activity often is a good way to encourage awareness.

● Plan a walk around one theme. For instance, on one walk, look only for different colors of butterflies. On the next walk, look for insects or birds, or plants with flowers or seeds. Focusing on one category at a time is more good practice in sharpening observation skills.



● Ask children to become detectives who are searching for missing animals. Search for traces of animals that you cannot see. Look for animal and bird tracks in patches of soft earth, find leaves with tiny holes that have been eaten by bugs, insect casings and shells, abandoned nests, owl castings, bits of egg shells, and bark tracings made by beetles. Use magnifying glasses to examine these clues without disturbing them.

● Draw and don't touch. Tote art supplies for your class in a backpack. When you or the children find a comfortable and scenic spot, give each child a small pad or heavy paper square and pencil, and ask them to make a sketch of a single flower, crooked tree, or the view.

When you get back to the center, encourage the young artists to complete their pictures with colored pencils, water colors, or crayons.

- Search out pleasant and unpleasant smells. List them. Which smells are part of nature and which are man-made?
- Pick up trash (safely) as you walk. Back at the center, divide the trash into two piles, deciding what kinds of trash decompose quickly to become part of the environment, and which do not. If you have a camera, you might also take before and after photos of the area. It will be a strong visual reminder that litter does not add beauty to nature.

LANGUAGE ARTS AND SCIENCE

During circle time, pass around a rose. The color, smell, feel, and construction of a rose is a wonderful thing. Pass one freshly picked rose around your circle of children, allowing each child enough time to look and gently touch. This is a perfect time to add the words *gentle* and *fragile* to their vocabulary. Smell the rose. Talk about the color of the rose, the difference in the shading of the outside petals, and the color of the tight bud in the center.

Compare the weight of the rose to the weight of a rock of similar size. Find words to describe how the rose looks and how it feels. Write children's descriptive words on an experience chart. Ask each child to take one pointer finger and draw the rose in the air.

Gather children around you in a small circle and ask them to look closely into the center of the rose. Have them pretend to become a tiny insect and imagine themselves snugly inside the rose. Ask, *"What does it look like inside the rose?" "What will you do inside the rose?"*

SUMMER MUSIC

Adapt songs you already sing to nature themes. For example, to the tune of "Wheels on the Bus," sing:

The leaves on the trees
Dance and wave
Dance and wave
Dance and wave.
The leaves on the trees
Dance and wave
As we walk down the road.

Make up as many verses as you can with the help of children.

Butterfly Song

(This was composed with the help of my toddlers, eight years ago. Each new class I teach rediscovers and loves it).

Fly little butterfly, fly.
Fly little butterfly, fly.
Fly up so high
That you almost touch the sky.
Fly little butterfly, fly.

Fly little butterfly, fly.
Fly little butterfly, fly.
Stretch your gauzy wings.
And think of lovely things.
Fly little butterfly, fly.

JP

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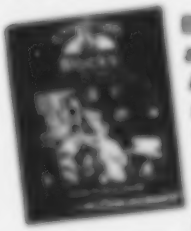

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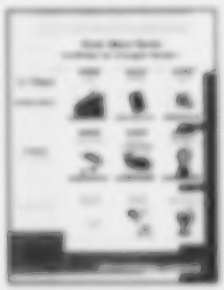

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FIRST TEACHER

Vol. 19 No. 5 *For People Who Care for Young Children* September/October 1998

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Learning Centers

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- What Is a Learning Center?
- Promote Diversity in All Centers
- Create Super Science Centers
- Learn with Manipulatives
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

by Jeannine Perez and Lisa L. Durkin

In the fall, many of us look forward to changing our wardrobes, sprucing them up with new sweaters, dresses, and accessories. Just as we pay attention to our wardrobes, our classrooms should be spruced up in September.

Learning centers are the focal points of many a classroom make over. This issue of *First Teacher* will give you hundreds of ideas for creating new centers and renewing your existing ones.

There are general hints on promoting diversity in all of your centers, including exciting manipulatives in centers, and letting children create their own center materials such as watercolors and play dough. There are lists of books to put in centers—as well as centers based on themes right out of children's literature.

But there are also ideas for special centers. Marie Cecchini tells you how to pair activities in the Science Center with Take-Home projects that will encourage parents to talk to their children about what they have been learning. And Susan Entz describes 11 adorable ways to store and display puppets.

Now as you plan your centers for this fall, consider the following questions:

▲ Does the learning center have both abstract and concrete goals? First determine what you want your children to learn. Then plan the application of the concept in different activities and games for interested children.

▲ Does the learning center add to or distract from the overall atmosphere of the room? Is it too busy? Is it too plain, fading into the background?

▲ Is the center alive and ongoing? A center can be well-planned, but if it never changes, it can become stale and boring.

▲ Does the center draw the children's interest? Are children curious enough to explore further and excited enough to expand on the ideas presented?

▲ Can the center hold children's interest for a reasonable length of time?

▲ Is there a center for everyone's interest? Some children like to dress up and pretend with friends. Others like to do puzzles by themselves. Build on interests but also encourage experimentation with new activities.

▲ Do you have a good blend of activities and quiet centers in your classroom? Can children work both in groups and alone in a center?

Now dig into this issue and have fun "making over" your learning centers.

Upcoming Themes:

1998

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER:
Holiday Magic

1999

JANUARY/FEBRUARY:
Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

MARCH/APRIL:
Terrific Tools

MAY/JUNE:
Alive and Growing

JULY/AUGUST:
Outdoor Arts

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER:
New Places and Faces

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER:
Once Upon a Time...

PHOTO CREDITS

Peter Lewin: cover,

ART CREDITS

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Catherine Minor: pages 6, 9, 16, 17, 23, 32, 33, 35

Nina Woldin: pages 5, 12,13, 14, 15, 18, 30, 31

HELPFUL HINTS

GOOD LEARNING CENTERS HAPPEN WHEN...

by Gail P. Jones

Good learning centers don't just happen! They take good planning — taking into account your long-range goals, the needs and interests of your children, as well as the curriculum and developmentally appropriate activities. Adapt the center ideas and environment to your monthly theme and, voila! Great learning centers!

Center areas can be devoted to reading, small motor or manipulatives, interactive play, blocks, dramatic play and /or housekeeping, art, music and movement, nature and science, and writing. The sand and water table may be included with one of the above mentioned centers or be separate.

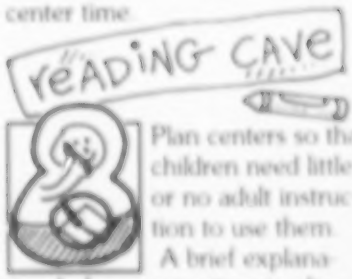
Plan to "educate" children on the appropriate use of the centers and involve them in creating rules for each by utilizing the first few days of each new theme unit. Listen as children offer their ideas of what fun things they could do and put them in your center lesson plans!

Institute a system to regulate the number of children using each center at one time. You might try bracelets of different colors on hooks, name tickets to place in pockets, or sign-in blackboards. If you're allowing free use of the centers, children will quickly learn how to count the numbers in each and take turns.

Plan centers so that traffic patterns and noise are not a problem. Put centers needing lots of cleaning up near the sink.

By labeling shelves, boxes, and other containers with pictures, even the youngest children can clean up in an orderly manner. (School supply catalogues or photos are a great source for pictures!)

Try to create environments that make the centers more interesting. For example—if your theme is dinosaurs, the reading centers might be a big cave for all your "Readasauruses"! The dramatic play area might be a dinosaur museum. Let children help create each environment and make signs and labels during center time.



Plan centers so that children need little or no adult instruction to use them. A brief explanation before center time is often enough as well as using laminated picture cards showing the sequence of using materials.

Encourage children to create ideas and rules to make centers work more efficiently and safely! Let them suggest new materials to be added during the month.

The best centers are those that allow children to explore, create, communicate, interact, question, solve problems, think, reason, and have fun with one another! Remember play is learning!

WHAT IS A LEARNING CENTER?

by Karen Stephens

Learning centers help you to organize your environment and curriculum. Learning centers provide a physical structure that helps children see all the possible play and learning activities available to them.

Center design should trigger curiosity and invite children to explore a topic. Learning centers can be arranged around different criteria. Regardless of the topic, they should clearly define areas for specific types of activity. Activities may relate to a type of play, such as dramatic play or to investigation into a specific topic, project, or theme, such as boats.

Learning centers can address a broad topic such as summer science, or a narrow one such as butterflies. Some learning centers are created by teachers alone; others are initiated and developed by children. The best learning centers evolve or emerge as children and teachers live and learn together everyday.

Centers come in all shapes, but they usually have at least three sides. The boundaries to define the area may be created by walls or partitions. Low storage shelves (such as block or art shelves) and cubbies are often used to help define learning centers.

The size of a learning center depends on your space and topic needs. Most learning centers allow up to four to six children to play at one time. But cozy learning centers for two can be fun. It's best to have a mix.

Learning centers should offer a wide variety of activities that have a common thread. This helps children be imaginative and prevents boredom. Well-developed learning centers help children focus their attention. They allow children to work individually or in small groups.

Learning centers organize resource materials for children's active learning. Most early childhood classroom learning centers relate to curriculum areas. Curriculum areas may include art, science, music, math, and language arts. (Sometimes language arts centers are further broken down into listening centers, reading centers, book nooks, writing centers, and puppet-theatre centers.)

Learning centers can also be arranged around a type of play such as: block play, dramatic play, active play, and manipulative play (Legos, *Lincoln Logs*, and puzzles), cooking, woodworking, water/sand play, sensory play (beans or cotton balls), and group board game play, (such as *Hi-Ho Cherrio*).

Learning centers with very narrow topics can also be developed. Examples are those that revolve around teddy bears, trucks, gardens, the post office—whatever creative teachers and kids come up with!

The best classrooms have a mixture of all the above. But since most classrooms aren't large enough to accommodate all centers at once, it's wise to rotate them. This helps to keep the classroom fresh and exciting. It also allows the classroom to reflect topics of investigation and learning taking place at any given time.

Following are "basics" for developing well-rounded classroom learning centers. Apply these basics to any type of learning center and you're sure to come up with one that everyone will appreciate and enjoy.

LEARNING CENTER BASICS

Toys and resource materials in the area should relate to one another in a way that is recognizable to children—for example, blocks, music, and art.

- All learning center materials should be chosen based on children's developmental abilities and special needs to ensure success.
- All materials should be made of nontoxic materials and safe for all children in the classroom.
- A variety of materials should be provided for creativity as well as children's individual interests.
- Materials should be chosen for sensory, hands-on active learning.
- Centers should allow children to work independently as well as in cooperative small groups.
- Toys and materials should allow children to work at their own pace.
- Whenever possible, materials should be self-correcting (such as self-correcting puzzles).
- Children should easily understand how to use the toys and materials so they can explore on their own rather than depending on teacher guidance.
- Learning center materials should be arranged attractively to capture children's attention.
- Centers should be easily accessible to children with items stored at their eye level.
- A system of storage should be provided that allows children to initiate play as well as accept responsibility for cleaning up after play. For instance, in the Block Center, outlines of blocks can guide children on proper block replacement. Water and paper towels should be near the Art Center.
- Learning center items should appeal to the five senses, providing children with something to see, touch, smell, or feel. And in the case of a cooking learning center, taste!
- A variety of media should be provided as appropriate. For instance, in a Language Arts Center, books, puppets, tape recorders, View Masters, story records, computer games, and even a VCR/TV for watching animated children's literature, could be provided.
- Learning centers should be equipped so they encourage complex play, imagination, and concentration. For instance, a sand table is more enticing when equipped with water, sand sieves, pie pans, plastic animals, shovels, molds, measuring cups, and the like. A water table is more fun when dolls can be given baths or boats raced.
- Learning centers should include non-biased materials which respect gender, ethnicity, family structure, etc.
- There should be ample materials in centers so children don't have to fight or compete just to play. For instance, duplicate dolls encourage cooperative play. Having at least 200 blocks for six children encourages sharing and generosity rather than greed and hoarding.
- Centers should include soft elements. Center accessories can include pillows, rugs, small rockers, bean bag chairs, plants, mobiles, lovely photos, and soft music.
- Centers should be designed to help guide children on how to use them. For instance, in an art center, paintbrushes can be color-coded with the proper paint cup so children replace them correctly.
- Learning centers should have clear traffic patterns in and out so children don't needlessly run into each other. Adequate space should be provided so traffic flow doesn't interrupt play.
- Centers should be arranged so noise is contained as much as possible. Carpet in the block area and dramatic play area absorbs noise and provides warmth and comfort.
- To bridge home and school learning, teachers should encourage families to provide items to learning centers whenever appropriate. For instance, if rocks and minerals are being studied in a learning center, parents can bring in samples of geodes or turquoise from their collections.

TODDLER TIME

PARENT PARTNERSHIPS

by Jeannine Perez

I discovered the value of parent involvement long ago with my first toddler class. Many parents, particularly those whose toddlers are also oldest children, approach their child's first preschool experience with apprehension. They may feel threatened by teachers they do not yet know. It may be their first separation from their child and the change is as frightening to them as to their child.

An initial investment of time and energy is required to organize, plan, and create positive partnerships with the parents of your class. This will actually help you save time later, and certainly will enrich your units and activities. It takes organization and planning at the beginning of the year, but the returns throughout that year come back tenfold. My list of things to do begins several weeks before my new class of toddlers comes through the door and builds on experiences from previous years and other classes.

First communications are made through cards, phone calls, and home visits. The best way to initiate this getting acquainted activity depends upon the customs in your own area. Some parents feel a home visit is intimidating and even intrusive until they know you. So save calls and visits for later in the year, and send cards and notes to children and parents of an incoming class, welcoming them to your room, and listing a few things that will happen that first day.

Next, take time to create an interactive and inviting bulletin board. If your first bulletin board is attractive and helpful, parents quickly become accustomed to checking the board for new information and upcoming events. The bulletin board format can change from year to year, but always should have the same information in some form or other. The board can be edged with a brightly colored border of children cut from strips of paper folded and cut like paper dolls, using assorted colors of construction paper so that the resulting board has a rainbow look of children holding hands. Display photographs showing favorite activities from the year before, a daily schedule, an overview of what you plan to accomplish that year (or month), a short biography so that parents will know you, your family and your interests and hobbies.

One wall display can be focused on the ARTIST OF THE WEEK. Display artwork done by all of your children and feature one each week. (Be sure to do so alphabetically and give each child equal attention). Frame or mount most artwork on colored construction paper, varying the display by turning the background paper sideways, vertically, or slanted. Sometimes, double mat the artwork for emphasis. (Recycle the backing paper again for other projects.) You can use old artworks left from months or years before as mats and backing. Never throw old art away, and always have a supply you can use to back and frame new masterpieces. Sometimes, count a child's art on a larger, contrasting heavy paper, then give the young artist several stamps and a pad. The stamp art around the frame may produce patterns (if the toddler understands pattern), or it can be abstract art. Also frame small prints by gluing drinking straws or applying stickers around the pictures. Pressed leaves, seeds, or shells glued to the frame make the art a natural masterpiece.

Post copies of favorite songs and fingerplays. Toddlers love repetition and think it great fun to share their favorites with their families. Sometimes, make up your own fingerplays with familiar tunes and give parents

copies to add to bedtime rituals. Make a list asking for discarded items that you can use in making first week projects. Try to keep this short and simple. Ask for things like old greeting cards, scraps of fabric or lace, empty boxes, and egg cartons. The goal is to involve parents in your classroom routine quickly and give them a feeling of being part of your team. With these simple items, create a group collage or a box sculpture. You can use the egg cartons for sorting games. Parents feel a sense of ownership already, and you've made a great beginning!

Block in tentative activities on the year's calendar. It is easier to plan future events when everyone has lots of notice, and it helps you organize too. Plan potlucks, work and play nights, special celebrations, picnics, and field trips for the whole year.

Dates can always be changed, and you sometimes can pair several events for one day or evening (such as a potluck and then a star walk to look at the sky, or an art show followed by a picnic). Extra activities also take much time and planning, but your parents will soon feel comfortable with you and with each other, and feel free to suggest changes. Some may (hopefully) take over for you and orchestrate the whole thing! Parents also become a support group for each other, helping out during family emergencies, applauding achievements and newborn babies.

Parents should receive weekly newsletters. Newsletters can be done mostly by your children. Gather and use drawings, gems from group conversations, anecdotes, and also try to include your own page with information about new units and future happenings.

Collect recipes all year and plan an end of the year recipe book. This begins as a natural outgrowth of potlucks and a desire to share recipes. You can sell your cookbooks to raise money for playground equipment. But this is a big undertaking unless you have a parent who will take the job over for you.

Whatever projects you undertake, make parents feel welcome and an important part of your program.

DIVERSITY IN CENTERS

by Margery Kranyik

"Ola!" "Bonjour!" "Ciao!"

The children in Mr. Ron's class greet each other daily in languages other than their native language. This is because Mr. Ron promotes cultural diversity in his classroom and has taught children to use words representative of the cultures in their class and community.

Learning words is only one way to promote cultural diversity in your class. *Hello World* by Fran Manushkin (Disney Press) is a great book to help children learn many ways to say, "Hello." But there are a variety of ways of introducing other cultures in your classroom learning centers. Let's find out.

Keep your eyes open for pictures of people or scenes from other cultures to hang around the room or in your learning centers. Calendars and posters and brochures from travel agencies are excellent sources of pictures. Don't hesitate to contact travel agents and foreign embassies for literature and pictures that will help illustrate your classroom celebration of cultures. Remember that friends and families can help, also.

READING AND WRITING CENTER

Perhaps the easiest way to introduce cultural diversity to children is through books. Have a variety of story and picture books available for children to look at and share with each other. If your personal class budget is limited, use public and school library books. You may be able to get a local business to underwrite the purchase of additional books reflecting diversity. Display ethnic newspapers and magazines collected from family members and local ethnic markets. To promote children's writing skills, provide markers and paper for them to copy greetings or characters or to illustrate what they like in their favorite story.

ART CENTER

Make books from assorted pairs of shoes to be used in the book corner. Create wide-ruled, grass-covered huts, houses with shutters, roofs, and doors. Add rice paper and paper scrolls to have some sample signs for drawing, cut paper and directions for origami, mat clay, and fabric. Encourage children to use real materials or samples of those used in other cultures. Collect grasses and straw to be used for weaving projects.

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MUSIC CENTER

Ask families to help add to your tape or CD collection by equipping your music center with music that reflects the family's heritage and traditions. Ask families who visit other countries to bring you tapes or musical instruments to play. Your local children's or science or art museum gift shop may have instruments to purchase. Again, ask families and other agencies to help fund your purchases.

SCIENCE CENTER

Have friends provide rocks and shells from various countries. Also include grains and dried beans for children to look at under magnifying lenses.

DRAMATIC PLAY CENTER

Include dolls and other toys from different cultures (jumpsuits, baskets, eating utensils, and menus. Ethnic grocery stores will have canned foods with authentic labels. Ask family members to contribute. Include a book such as Bread, Bread, Bread by Ann Morris (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard) for children's pretend cooking play.

SPECIAL DISPLAY CENTER

Create a mini museum. Ask families to lend objects for display in a center that includes a map of origin of the objects. Include photographs and maps.

BLOCK AREA

Include unit blocks representing housing made in the Art Center. Introduce new models of transportation for block play: toy bicycles, trains, double-decker buses, and vans. To get some new ideas about models of transportation, read Take a Ride with Mickey by Seymour Reit (Disney Press) to see how children in other lands travel.

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SUPER SCIENCE CENTERS

by Marie E. Cecchini

Learning centers help children learn in a way that is most natural to them, through hands-on, sensory experiences. Science centers invite children to explore and experiment in the process of making discoveries about changes and outcomes in their environment. Encourage your youngsters to share their latest discoveries with their families by incorporating these science center activities and take-home projects into your program.

Plants

Center Fun:

Gather plant cuttings from pussyback plants, ivy, begonias, and spider plant "babies." Help children write the plant names on plant-safe glue stickers, then place one sticker on the outside of a small plastic cup. Prepare one cup for each plant type. Let children pour water into the cups, then place plant cuttings in the appropriate cups. Explain that these will take 7-10 days to root and set the cuttings aside. During the waiting period, children can sort and count leaves, make leaf rubbings and count veins, make leaf foil prints by pressing aluminum foil over the backs of various leaves, trace leaf shapes, and work on the following take-home project.

Take-Home Fun:

Provide children with paper, markers, scissors, craft sticks, and tape to make plant plaques. Invite them to draw and cut a seasonal design from the paper (craft an apples for fall). Help them to write the name of their new plant on their shapes, then let them tape a craft stick to the back of the design. Let children prepare plants for taking home by filling a plastic cup half full of soil, inserting the rooted plant, then filling in around the plant with additional soil. Help them to water their new plants, then let them insert their plant plaks into the soil next to the cup.

Seeds

Center Fun:

Collect, or have parents contribute, various fruits and vegetables. Open each to find the seeds. Match each seed with the correct fruit or vegetable. Invite children to taste each, as appropriate.

Collect seed packets from sunflowers, pumpkins, watermelon, green beans, and carrots. Open each, aligning the seed name on each packet, and compare the seeds. Glue the seed packets and a small amount of seeds to separate index cards. Challenge children to match the seed cards with the correct packet cards.

Plant a few of each seed type in separate containers. Label each container with the plant name and a sample seed. Observe the growth and determine which seeds grow first, second, etc.

Take-Home Fun:

Prepare a construction cardboard square and a matching paper, one for each child. At the top of the cardboard, let children glue a plant clip for hanging. Then have them glue the paper square over the cardboard. Have them draw and color a pumpkin, an apple, or a sunflower on the paper. Provide children with glue and seeds for coloring their pumpkin or apple pictures with matching seeds, or adding sunflower seeds to the center of their flowers.

Magnets

Center Fun:

Provide children with magnets and a container of objects, such as a pencil, a paper clip, a rock, carpeting, foil, etc. (not too many). Also give them paper and markers. Allow them to discover which items the magnets will pick up/attract. As they make their discoveries, have them write the numbers 1-10 on their papers and draw a picture of one "attracted" item next to each number.

Supply two clear jars, one containing water and paper clips, the other containing sand and nails, paper clips, and safety pins. Help them to discover if magnets will attract through water and sand. Experiment with magnetic attraction through heavy and thin cardboard, a book, a pot holder, a sheet of paper, etc.

Experiment with a bar magnet, an ornament magnet, and a horseshoe magnet. Which has the strongest magnetic attraction?

Take-Home Fun:

Have children color and cut out a magnetic design from construction or felt cardboard, according to directions. Glue a magnetic strip to the back of each. Small and large magnets work to secure the layers together. Challenge children to match pairs and share their results with the class.

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CREATIVE MANIPULATIVES

by Tania K. Cowling

Children love to play with manipulatives, store bought or homemade. A manipulative is an object used with one's hands in a skillful manner. In other words, children can manipulate these table toys to develop fine motor coordination and these same objects encourage thinking skills, visual perception, and problem solving. Explore some of these innovative ideas and watch your children learn by manipulating at different centers in the room.

PUZZLE CENTER

All Kinds of Puzzles

Children love to play with wooden inlay puzzles, but there is a world of puzzles that can be made. Try collecting the front panel of cereal boxes with their bright colors and pictures that children can identify. Laminate the cover with a sheet of adhesive clear plastic. Cut the cover into zigzag puzzle pieces. On the back of each piece, make an identifying mark with a black permanent marker and then store all the pieces in zip-locking bags. You might want to have a matching cover from the same type of cereal as an example while children work with the pieces to correctly finish the puzzle.

ART CENTER

Manipulative Art. Gather a few of each type of manipulative toys you have and place them in the center of a table. Provide children with white paper and crayons. Explain to them how they can cover the toy with the sheet of paper and proceed to do a crayon rubbing. Children can cover the paper with a collage of manipulative toy rubbings. Help them notice the texture, the shape, and how things fit together.

Shape Treasure Hunt

Pre-cut shapes from construction paper. In advance, hide the shapes all around the room making sure to have enough so each child can get at least 8-12 shapes. This is a game plus an art activity after the shapes are found. Direct children to hunt for the shapes hidden. At the end of the hunt, encourage children to share shapes if one gets many more than the other children. It is now time to return to the table and discuss what they found. "Who can name the shapes?" "Who can name the colors?" "Did you get two or more of the same shape?" Now, let children try to manipulate the shapes and create a picture or design. With glue, children can paste these into place.

BLOCK CENTER

Twin Constructions

Set out bi-together toys such as Legos, Duplo blocks or any other construction type toys. Have two children sit side-by-side and try to construct the same structure. This activity teaches children to pay attention to color, shape, position, and also give them practice in following someone else's lead.

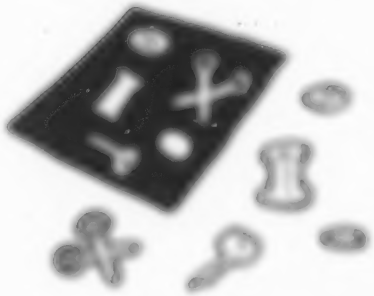
Create a Table Town Use masking tape to create patterns for streets on a table top. Encourage children to construct buildings with small blocks and place them along the streets. Use props such as trees, small cars, trucks, and people to make the town look authentic. Children love to use their imaginations while playing with this "table town."

MATH CENTER

Poker Chips Give children a box containing red, white, and blue poker chips. Let children sort the chips by color and then count them. Next make patterns with the poker chips (two red, one blue, two white, one red, two blue, two white, etc.). Let children copy the pattern with the remaining chips.

Geo-Board Children can create geometric shapes on this grid-like board with the use of large rubber bands. Hammer nails in a grid pattern about one inch apart all over a plywood square. Give the board to children along with a variety of rubber bands (different sizes and colors). Have children stretch the rubber bands around the nails to create geometric shapes.

Shape Matching You can make your own shape matching boards with the use of spray paints. Collect items with interesting shapes, such as jar lids, a spool, children's scissors, keys, etc. Place these items down onto a piece of heavy cardboard. Spray paint over the objects with a bright color. When it is dry, place all the items into a zip-locking bag. Children can take the board and the bag of items and match the shapes. You can make several of these boards, all with different collectable finds.



Counting Can Make a counting can, using lids from milk jugs and a coffee can. Take the coffee can and either paint the surface or cover it with contact paper or wallpaper. Take the plastic lid and cut a large X in the center with a knife or scissors. Collect jug caps (as many as you can). The child pushes a plastic jug cap through the X so it falls into the can. He counts each cap as he pushes it through the X.

Wallpaper Match Collect wallpaper samples and make a set of two matching cards. Index cards work well. Glue a large square of the same paper on two cards. After you have made a variety of cards, shuffle the deck and let children turn over each card and match pairs. You might want to laminate each card with clear adhesive paper. Children can practice visual discrimination and attention to detail in this activity.

A CENTER AS BIG AS ALL OUTDOORS

by Barbara F. Backer

It's back-to-school time and teachers are busy sprucing up their classrooms. Whether you're rearranging furniture, putting up fresh bulletin board paper, placing things back where they belong, labeling items, or replacing worn crayons and paintbrushes with new ones, you're probably spending a lot of time focusing on classroom learning centers.

You know the value of these centers so you include them in your daily plans, focusing on what children can learn in each one. But, do you remember to include the largest learning area of all—the Outdoor Learning Area?

Young children enjoy making discoveries, and they are learning all of the time, indoors and out. By concentrating on the Outdoor Area, you can enhance the opportunities for learning that occur there.

PREPARING YOUR OUTDOOR AREA

Before the school year begins, give the outdoor area the same attention you give your classroom. Clean and organize the play yard by picking up trash, raking out the sandbox, and asking your administrator to arrange for adding fresh sand. Discard broken sand toys and add new ones.

Use sandpaper to smooth out rough areas on equipment, and use touch-up paint where required. Wash the play yard's plastic equipment and all of the wheeled toys (or have children do this during the first few days of school).

Check wheeled toys for rough spots, then sand and repaint these. Oil the metal parts of wheeled toys. Sweep the riding path and check to see if it is in need of repairs.

Think of how you can help your outdoor environment look inviting and colorful. Is it a pleasant place to be? Would a few strategically planted bushes provide a "quiet space" for children? Would a few hanging plants add beauty? Could colorful fabric banners brighten the space?

Think about outdoor safety. Can you see and supervise every part of the yard no matter where you are standing? If not, what changes need to be made?

A FEW NEW CHANGES

Provide outdoor tables and chairs (or benches) where children can display nature "finds" or examine items that you've placed there. Make art supplies available so young ones can represent what they see.

Mark off a protected area of the yard and transform it into a garden. Autumn is a great time for children to plant bulbs that will sprout in the spring. If you live in snow country, be sure to include early-blooming crocus that will peek through layers of snow to show their blossoms.

In warmer climates of the south and west, let children plant winter annuals such as pansies and snapdragons or put in perennials such as Dianthus. These will bloom all fall and winter. Check with local gardening stores to see what is appropriate in your climate.

SCIENCE ALL AROUND YOU

Make use of materials that occur naturally in your outdoor environment. In autumn, you'll find that most plants are heavy with seeds. Plan for your children to search the plants in the play yard or those in a nearby field for seeds. Gather some yourself in advance to show children what they'll be looking for. Give each child a collection bag (plastic, zip-locking bag) for carrying the seeds and other treasures they find.

Challenge children to sort or classify the seeds into categories. Some suggestions: smooth/sticky; large/small; brown/not brown; round/not round. Have children suggest categories, too.

Plant a few of these seeds in the garden and watch for growth. Save more for spring planting. Also, let children experience planting some of these seeds now in conditions where they can watch them sprout and grow.

Provide shovels and offer dishpans or cardboard cartons for children to fill with dirt. Invite them to plant the seeds. If the weather is already cold, bring the pans inside. Have children water the seeds every few days and observe the plants that sprout.

OUTDOOR MATH

- Take advantage of outdoor math opportunities.
- Put out ten plastic jars or whipped topping containers and write numerals 0-9 on them. Children can gather natural items to count into the containers. Challenge children to find something different each day!
- Use yarn to measure distances from one tree to several others. Compare the lengths of yarn. Which tree is closest/farthest from the first tree?
- Use children's bodies for measuring. How many children holding hands does it take to reach from one side of the yard to the other? How many to reach around the trunks of various trees or around the swing set?
- With yarn, measure the distance from the top of the climbing bars to ground. Now lay that yarn on the ground so children can see the distance from a different perspective. Have several children lie head-to-foot along the yarn. How many children tall is the top of the climbing bar?

LISTENING AND LITERACY

Build listening skills outdoors by having children sit quietly for a few minutes and listen for sounds. Make a list of the sounds children heard.

Repeat the activity every few weeks and compare charts. What changed? What stayed the same?

Bring a basket of books outside. Include field guides so you and the children can identify birds, trees, flowers, insects and butterflies you see. Include favorite story books in your basket for children who want to spend a few quiet moments reading.

As you continue to concentrate on your outdoor area, you'll see more and more opportunities for learning. Listen to children's suggestions for outdoor activities, as well. Together you'll discover that opportunities for outdoor learning are as plentiful as the specks of dirt on your playground.

BEYOND SAND & WATER

by Susan Root

The sensory table can be one of the most frequently used pieces of equipment in your classroom. Young children gravitate to this center, whether it be a large basin or a freestanding table. This center offers opportunities for exploration, sensory stimulation, and the chance to interact verbally while working alongside others.

Sand and water are the most common materials for the sensory table. Children's play in sand and water can be enhanced by the addition of a variety of materials over time. These new additions will encourage children to continue to explore the nature of sand and water. Common additions include: food coloring, bubbles, containers for pouring, sieves, funnels, tubing, toy dishes, plastic animals , and little plastic people. Adults interacting through comments and questions will also help children think in new ways as they explore the materials.

The sensory table can also hold many other materials besides sand and water such as cornmeal, flour, potting soil, buttons, snow, pine cones, etc. What you put in will depend on the ages of your children. Safety comes first! Most of these materials will allow children experiences similar to sand and water because they can be dumped, poured, measured, emptied, and filled. Besides similarities, each has its own special characteristics which children will soon discover.

The sensory table also provides a contained area for many other kinds of activities. By changing the focus of the table, new kinds of play and learning will develop.

▲ Fill the table with toilet paper tubes, cardboard cones, or other "recyclables" and some masking tape and you have a "construction center."

▲ Try using the table as a place for magnet exploration. Will magnets move other objects when you hold them under the table?

▲ Place small plastic animals and some pegboards for "fencing" and you will soon see "Old MacDonald's Farm" emerging.

▲ Freeze containers of water and place ice blocks in the table. Let children sprinkle with salt and watch the cracks appear. Add watercolors and brushes and let children explore the effects of color on the ice.

▲ Try mixing cornstarch and water "Goop" in the table. Just dump two boxes of cornstarch in and slowly add water. What happens? It can be rolled into a ball, but also acts like a slimy substance. If it gets too dry, add a little water. Too wet? Leave uncovered and it will dry out. It's a very sensory experience!

Children learn best when new and interesting materials are added to their environment over a period of time. These inexpensive and readily available materials will keep your sensory table challenging to children all year long.

Space Mud

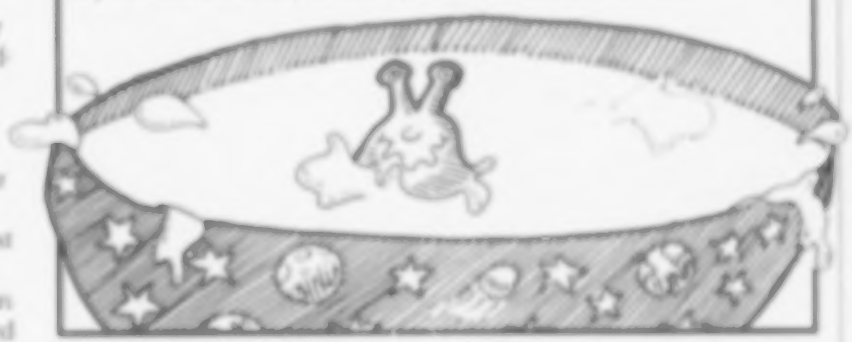
Space Mud (available from Lakeshore Learning Materials) is easy to make yourself and provides more interesting textures.

You'll Need: ● 2 cups white glue ● 1 1/2 cups water at room temperature ● 1 cup hot water ● 2 1/2 level tablespoons 20 Mule Team Borax ● food coloring

What to Do:

1. Combine glue and room temperature water mixed with food coloring.
2. In a larger bowl, combine hot water and Borax, stirring until dissolved.
3. Slowly pour glue mixture into Borax mixture, stirring constantly. It will thicken. If there is excess liquid, pour it off.
4. Store covered for several weeks.

Try cutting Space Mud with a plastic knife, tear or stretch it with your hands, or let it "melt" off the edge of the table. Space Mud will not stick to any surfaces and is easy to clean up. It may stick to soft surfaces.



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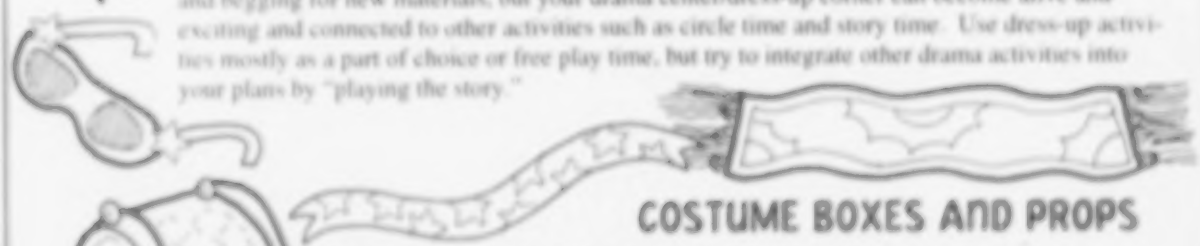
DRAMATIC PLAY CENTER

A Place to Pretend

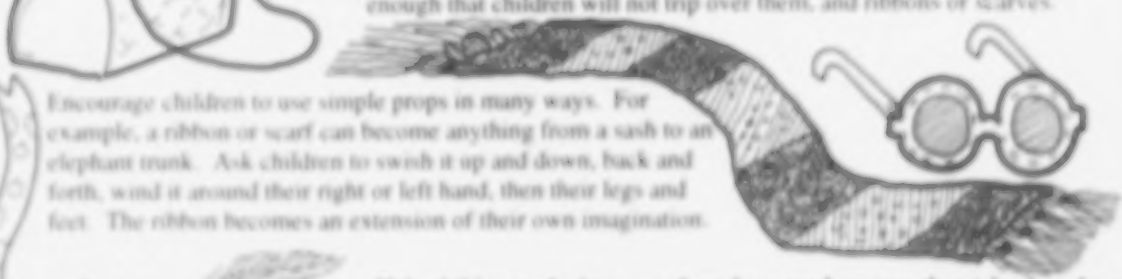
by Jeannine Perez

Pretending is a valuable form of play. Drama can be many things: an exercise in cooperation, a form of natural socialization, a nonthreatening way to express feelings and respond to situations, a stretch of creativity and imagination, an encouragement for problem-solving and expansion of vocabulary, and a wonderful way to practice growing up. It takes some planning, elbow grease and begging for new materials, but your drama center/dress-up corner can become alive and exciting and connected to other activities such as circle time and story time. Use dress-up activities mostly as a part of choice or free play time, but try to integrate other drama activities into your plans by "playing the story."



COSTUME BOXES AND PROPS

Materials, which should be changed often, could include: purses (Put a few surprises inside.), a sheer curtain or two, skirts with elastic waistband cut short enough that children will not trip over them, and ribbons or scarves.



Encourage children to use simple props in many ways. For example, a ribbon or scarf can become anything from a sash to an elephant trunk. Ask children to swish it up and down, back and forth, wind it around their right or left hand, then their legs and feet. The ribbon becomes an extension of their own imagination.

Help children make hats, use them for a week or two, then take them home. Fold newspapers into hats and trim with paper or real feathers and other decorations. Or unfold newspapers, coat each single sheet with wallpaper paste, and then mold six or seven around a bowl or pan. Let dry, trim the brim with a scissors to the shape you like, then decorate.

Children practice and enhance fine motor skills when they zip, button, and snap by themselves. So put plenty of clothes with easy fasteners in the costume box.

Costume boxes are fun to collect and fun to use, but they are only the frosting on the cake. Try as many other forms of drama and "let's pretend" as you can work into your schedule. Turn the page for ideas.

Start with a memory...

Young children think in concrete terms. Their world view is shaped through their five senses. Begin creative drama by connecting make believe with memories of real and sensory experiences. Even a toddler can pretend to touch something hot or use facial expressions to pretend to be happy, surprised, or frightened. Try some basic and realistic activities, then ask children to help you make up your own situations.

- Pretend you are a baby just learning to walk.
- Your feet are stuck to the floor with a big wad of bubble gum.
- Stir up a chocolate cake in a large bowl. Be careful not to slop any over the edge of the bowl.
- You have just lost your mother in a big and crowded store.
- You are very hungry, and you just dropped your lunch on a puddle.
- You want to pick a rose, but you prick your finger on a sharp thorn.
- You have a HUGE sandwich in your hands. Take a BIG bite, and chew.
- You are walking outside and smell something wonderful! Something terrible?

Act Out Words

Encourage children to learn and act out new words. Collect words and put them down on index cards. This pretend play is handy for transition times.

Skits from Recipes

Make cards with a variety of suggested settings, characters, emotions, and time periods (with pictures either drawn or cut from magazines). These can include castle, library, hospital, soccer field, swimming pool, moon, jungle, dragon, basketball player, teacher, baby, and hungry, frightened, happy, surprised, yesterday, long ago, tomorrow, three o'clock today.

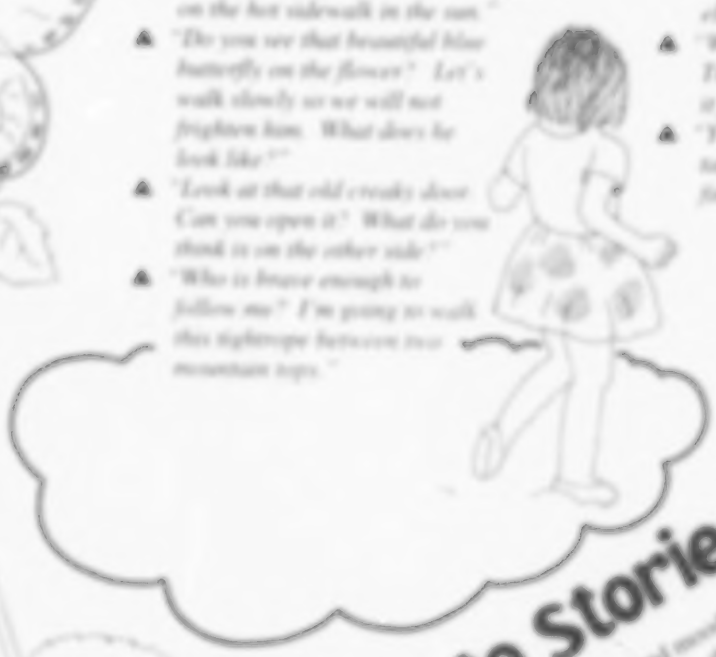
To make the activity fun and nonthreatening, let each child draw several cards, and then ask the whole group for ideas to make the cards into a story. Just talk about the story during group time, and let children act out those ideas that interest them in the dress-up corner. Your goal for this activity should be simply to get the creative juices and some "what if" curiosity going. Doing this regularly will help children with journal and creative writing skills for later years.

Collect and laminate interesting illustrations from magazines for picture story starters. With some practice, it is easy to weave creative stories from interesting pictures.

Now try something more abstract...

It is easiest to gradually integrate real with imaginary situations when children are ready to do so. Begin to use visual imagery in these activities. Try some of these situations. Join in the pretending with your children.

- *"It is raining very hard. You are a windshield wiper on the car. Go back and forth faster and faster so the driver can see the road."*
- *"You are an ice cream cone dropped on the hot sidewalk in the sun."*
- *"Do you see that beautiful blue butterfly on the flower? Let's walk slowly so we will not frighten him. What does he look like?"*
- *"Look at that old creaky door. Can you open it? What do you think is on the other side?"*
- *"Who is brave enough to follow me? I'm going to walk this tightrope between two mountain tops."*
- *"We are shrinking! We are growing down becoming so tiny that we can go inside this green pepper. It is cool and green inside. Look at the seeds. What else do we see?"*
- *"We are floating up to clouds. Try to walk on them. What does it feel like to walk on a cloud?"*
- *"You are a tiny bug lost in the tall, tall grass. How can you find your home?"*



Respond to Stories & Music

- Read "My Shadow" by Robert Louis Stevenson. Talk about shadows in the room and outside. Ask, "Are shadows scary or funny?" If possible, go outside and locate children's shadows. If not possible, imagine shadows. Dance with your shadows.
- Play music with a variety of tempos and moods, and ask children to move the way the music tells them to or makes them feel.
- Ask children to show with their faces how the Hungry Caterpillar felt after eating everything in sight, how the very Billy Goat Gruff felt when he heard the voice of the Troll, and how Baby Bear felt when he saw his broken chair.

Productions, Plays & Skits

A big production for the public with background sets painted on large pieces of cardboard or sheets, costumes, and props can be a result of regular drama and role-playing in your room, but certainly is not a necessary activity. You can make sock and mitten puppets each year. Children love to put on impromptu five minute performances for other classes and for parents.

It is the process and not the polished product that is important, and that the joy of simple sharing is enough. When we pretend, we are trying out different choices, we are solving problems, and creating a world that is beautiful to us. Drama becomes our connection to the magical world of fantasy where anything is possible. Have fun with your imagination!

Dramatic Games

Games are an easy way to pretend. These games integrate physical and imaginary elements to help children with vocabulary, following and giving directions, and group interactions.

- **Make a Mask.** This is a circle game. Ask one child to make a face that shows particular feelings and then freeze it into a mask. Then she should slowly pretend to peel hermask off, forehead to chin, and pass it to another child who tries to don the mask and imitate the same expression. Go around the circle playing this game until each child has had a chance to participate.
- **Simon Says.** This favorite game helps children practice listening skills and following directions. You can make the directions more imaginative by asking children to pretend to be a bird or a robot or a frog.
- **Catch a Beanbag.** In this game, toss a beanbag to a child, and then give two or three step instructions. For example: *"Stand up and turn around twice. Now sit back down as softly as though the floor were a pillow." "Pretend to be an elephant and walk with heavy feet to the door and back. Now swing your trunk twice and then become Bessy again."*
- **How Many Ways to Get from Here to There?** Ask all of the children to line up on one side of the room or the play yard, and place a line of masking tape the length of yarn at the other end. Everyone must get from here to there. The catch is, no one can walk or run. It is a challenge to come up with many alternative ways to get from here to there.
- **Statue Freeze.** Ask children to form a circle. Then give them instructions to pantomime doing a task. For example, you might ask them to pretend to do dishes, or put on a coat, or sweep the floor. When you say, *"FREEZE,"* all children must remain still, not moving until you direct them to pretend to do something else.

FAIRY TALE LEARNING IN CENTERS

by Karin Leigh-Spicer

You can bring fairy tales into your learning centers to create a unique and fun way for young learners to practice basic skills. Any and all fairy tales can be used. A different fairy tale can be highlighted at each center or the same fairy tale can be used for all centers. Changing the stories periodically gives children new material to explore. Make sure that books of fairy tales are available for reference. The following are examples of stories and learning centers that can be created around them.

MATH AND SCIENCE CENTER

Here young learners can practice basic counting skills and science principles.

- **Jack and the Bean Stalk** Let children weigh the giant's golden egg on a counter weight. Let children count beans or plant beans in paper cups and observe their growth.
- **The Gingerbread Man** Children might count gingerbread men (made of wood or paper that has been laminated). Some children can count the gingerbread men's eyes and buttons. They can also smell different spices (cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg).
- **The Three Bears** Children can sequence the largest to the smallest bowls. Then match the papa bear with the biggest bowl, mama with the medium, and the baby with the smallest.

ART CENTER

Here young learners can nurture their creativity as well as build fine motor skills.

- **Jack and the Bean Stalk** Have children retell the story using props (harp, seeds). Young learners can draw and glue pictures of the story in order of events.
- **The Bremen Town Musicians** Encourage children to create posters advertising the animals' first musical concert.

DRAMA CENTER

Here young learners can develop their expressive language skills. At a magic castle (constructed of wood or cardboard), children can reenact any of their favorite fairy tales. Costumes such as ball gowns, hats, gloves, wands, and boas should be available for children to wear. Let children retell stories including the beginning, the middle, and the end.

- **The Bremen Town Musicians** Let children sing like animals or create songs for the animals to sing.
- **Cinderella** Children can ballroom dance.
- **The Frog Prince** Have children jump like frogs.
- **Cinderella** Young learners can try on all sizes and types of shoes.

BLOCK AREA

- **The Three Little Pigs** Children can build houses with bricks (blocks) or sticks.

Young learners can also refine their gross and fine motor skills as they play games or participate in activities that were popular at the time fairy tales were written. Children can skip rope, gallop with hobby horses, and weave on looms.

PUPPET PLAY CENTER

by Susan Entz

Puppets are one of a teacher's most useful tools. They help us to get and maintain children's attention, engage them in conversation, explain concepts, and stimulate imagination.

Rather than piling the puppets in a box or basket for storage, devise an attractive puppet play center. As with any learning center, children need some structure for working constructively in a puppet center. Limit the number of children in the center at any given time, and discuss how to play with and care for these colorful toys appropriately. Monitor the center frequently when it is first introduced; help children learn to settle disputes over puppets as they do over other toys.

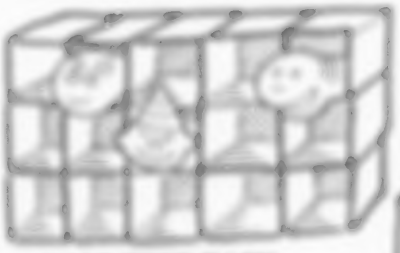
Puppet displays can also be used to invite children into a curriculum-based learning center. Try one or more of the following techniques and invite children to think of their own "puppet nappers," places for puppets to nap between play sessions.

CUP HOLDER PUPPET RACK

Lay an accordion-type cup holder flat on the top of a low toy shelf. Place a finger puppet over each knob so it stands up.

HAND PUPPET CONDO

Cut the tops off of clean, half-gallon cartons. Glue the sides together five cartons wide and three high. Spray paint inside and out. Place on a shelf or on the floor and put a hand puppet in each opening facing out so the face is exposed.



SHOE TREE RACK

Assemble a shoe tree and insert large mitt puppets over each wire loop so they are standing up, ready to play.

COAT HOOK

Hang large puppets on coat hooks. (Safety note: Screw the hook into the wall several inches above the height of the tallest child to prevent injury should a child trip.)

MILK CARTON BOX HOUSES

Cut one side out of a series of half-gallon milk cartons. Glue together side by side and then spray paint the construction. Put a puppet into each opening.

HAMMOCK NAPPER

Hang a piece of mesh at child height in the puppet corner. Have puppets nap in the "hammock" while waiting patiently for play time.

THEME-RELATED PUPPET HOUSING

Build on the current theme with a specially designed puppet house. If the group is studying farm animals, paint a cardboard box to resemble a barn. Cut doors in the side for the farm animal puppets.

When birds are the topic, find a shallow box that can be decorated with twigs and dried grass to look like a nest; stock the bird puppets inside.

NUTS AND BOLTS DRAWER

Store tiny puppets in the pullout drawers in the plastic storage container that is used for organizing screws, nuts, bolts and other pieces of hardware.

PAJAMA BAG OR HANGING SHOE BAG

Recycle old pajama bags or shoe bags into attractive puppet holders. Hang them on the back of tall toy shelves, the side of a filing cabinet, or from a hook.

VEGETABLE HANGER

Suspend a vegetable basket from the ceiling so children can reach each of the baskets. Position various puppets so they are looking out of the baskets.

CLOTHESLINE STORAGE

Hang a clothesline across the puppet center low enough for children to reach it. Clip light weight puppets onto the line with clothespins.

SHOPPING BAG PUPPET STORAGE

Decorate a shopping bag to correspond with the current classroom theme and label the bag. Put all of the puppets related to that theme into the bag and display it on a toy shelf or hang from a hook.

For more ideas, see *Puppetry in Early Childhood Education* by Tamara Hunt and Nancy Renfro (Nancy Renfro Studios)

THE GIVING CENTER

by Sherry Burrell

Giving. No one is a more sincere gift-giver than a small child. Although we know that young children are egocentric, we also know that in the midst of their ME mess, they delight in giving things to others. Have you ever seen the look of sly joy in the eye of the child who has a bunch of dandelions hidden behind her back? Or the excitement in the voice of a child who has drawn a special picture just for you? The gift and the giver may be small, but the heart is big. Children don't give for any ulterior motive, they just enjoy showing off what they've thought to share with someone! Teachers who capitalize on the enjoyment of giving are wise indeed. They are teaching young children that the spirit of giving is a wonderful state of mind!

The Giving Center invites children to let themselves in on a special feeling. The special adults in their lives respond warmly and lovingly to these small gifts, and their reactions feed the child's need to be recognized in positive ways. Even the most reluctant child becomes excited about a project if she might get to wrap it up and present it with a flair to someone important. Often children are just as fascinated by the process of wrapping as they are with the process of making! Filled with bright colors and lots of interesting shapes and textures, the well-stocked Giving Center may become the busiest center in your classroom.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

Sometimes we make the mistake of inadvertently teaching children that we only give to others when the holiday is right. We set up activities specifically planned for children to create gifts because a special day is coming up. Once the big day has gone by, so have the special gift-giving activities. While arranging special activities during specific holidays is a great idea, too often we fall into the trap of preparing an activity that is far too difficult for the children to successfully manage without lots of adult help.

How many times has this type of activity ended with the adults doing all the work? The adults fix the mistakes or clean up the messes, they end up straightening out the wrapping job or rewriting the words on the card. The gift turns out beautifully, but the child has absolutely no investment in it.

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He gives it without guilt because he's been told to give it.

GREAT GIFTS

Contrast that scene with a regular school day in which the child has drawn a great picture, has made a play dough bowl, has helped cook something, or has "written" a crude story. Almost anything can be turned into a gift! Parents love to receive any handmade items from their children:

- Pictures
- Stories
- Handmade books
- Collage pictures
- Coupons redeemable for a hug, a back rub, or a great big smile
- A letter (What I did today)
- A sign (MY DAD IS THE GREATEST!)
- A photograph taken at school showing the child engaged in favorite activities
- A collection of simple sayings or poems
- The following note wrapped in a package (just in case the child enjoys wrapping more than making something to wrap).

Inside this box,
might seem like just air.
But this gift is for you,
to show that I care.

DYED PAPERS

IN THE BOOK CORNER

BOOKS TO PUT IN CENTERS

by Karel Kilimnik

Books can be excellent additions to many learning centers. Books can be read aloud and placed in a learning center, or a tape of the book can be made and used. You can show your children how to "read" the pictures as a beginning step to developing independent readers.

MATH CENTER

■ *Find the Fish* —A Hide and Seek Animal Book by Amanda Wallwork (Puffin Books) presents a charming, colorful way to help children find things that are the same. Vibrant colors catch your eye as the reader is encouraged to find the snake that is the shape of the spy a butterfly? This book lends itself to matching games laid out for eager little ones to complete.

■ Tana Hoban's photographic books *Is It Longer? Is It Smaller?* and *Exactly the Opposite* both published by Mulberry Books). Use these books to help children make observations and focus on describing them. They can be part of centers that explore size relationships and opposites using games, puzzles, and books.

■ *One Guinea Pig Is Not Enough* by Kate Duke (Dutton) explores adding one more. She includes language plus one and makes in addition to using plus and equal signs. Her book encourages little ones to explore adding on. Put out many potatoes and see what happens when you add one more.

■ *Ten Dogs in the Window: A Countdown Book* by Clare Maward (North South Books) explores the mathematical concepts of predicting, matching and counting backwards from 10. Have paper dolls and dogs for children to use to act out this countdown.

ART CENTER

The next set of books on encourages children to look at their environment using shapes, colors, and textures. Several of the books use collage as illustration to the text.

■ *Look Out* by Tana Hoban. Cassowaldout provides a circular lens through which to view a small portion of a large object. Not only is there a frontal view, but as you turn the page to see the whole picture, you get a retrospective view of the preceding object. It is an interesting book to help children focus in on one aspect of an object. Make your own circular lens: circle cut out of a piece of construction paper through which to view a variety of objects. Let children draw pictures of their guesses to compare with the object.

■ Bessora Onyefulu presents us with a third book focusing on her native country of Nigeria. *Is Chuk Only Color Blue?* An African Book of Colors (Cobblehill Books), she turns her photographer's sensibilities towards color as seen in young Nneka's village. The book starts on a delightful note when Nneka's little brother Chuk tells her why blue is his favorite color. "Because the sky is blue and my best shirt is blue." Nneka proceeds to describe the other colors in Chuk and why she likes them from the red caps worn only by the chiefs to the brown woodlice stuck on Grandmother's hat.

This book could inspire color explorations in the Art Center. Each week a different color can be selected and children encouraged to think about how it is used in their own lives.

■ *Three Cool Kids* by Rebecca Emberley (Little, Brown) presents an other version of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" complete with threatening wood cut and recent city hi running out of grass. The artwork is inspiring. It makes you want to start collecting newspaper, cardboard and scraps to use in child-created pictures.

BOOKS FOR THE BOOK NOOK

by Paula Gaj Sitarz

A book nook is one of the most important learning centers in the classroom. What follows is a list of subjects to cover in your book nook with suggested titles for each topic. You might want to place these books in learning centers with similar themes (for example, add image books to the *All About Me* Center).

ABC BOOKS

- *Alphabatics* by Suse MacDonald (Bradbury)
- *Anno's Alphabet* by Mitsumasa Anno (Crowell)
- *On Market Street* by Arnold Lobel (Greenwillow)

COLORS

- *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Eric Carle (Henry Holt)
- *Growing Colors* by Bruce McMillan (Lothrop Lee & Shepard Books)
- *Planting a Rainbow* by Lois Ehlert (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)

SHAPES

- *Color Farm* by Lois Ehlert (Lippincott)
- *Color Zoo* by Lois Ehlert (Lippincott)
- *Shapes and Things* by Tana Hoban (Macmillan)

OTHER CONCEPTS

- *My First Look at Trees* (Random House)
- *The Nursery Collection* by Shirley Hughes (Lothrop Lee & Shepard)
- *When This Box Is Full* by Patricia Lillie (Greenwillow)

ANIMALS

- *Come Out Muskrats* by Jim Arnosky (Lothrop Lee & Shepard)
- *Deer at the Brook* by Jim Arnosky (Lothrop Lee & Shepherd)
- *Whose Baby* by Masayuki Yabuuchi (Philomel)

SCIENCE AND NATURE

- *Fireflies in the Night* by Judy Hawes (Harper Collins)
- *How a Seed Grows* by Helene J. Jordan (Harper Collins)
- *Keep Looking* by Millicent Selsam (Macmillan)
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carles (Philomel)

WEATHER AND SEASONS

- *Amy Loves the Wind* by Lillian Hoban (Harper & Row) and other titles in the series
- *Apples and Pumpkins* by Anne Rockwell (Macmillan) and other titles in the series
- *Everything Grows* by Rafi (Crown)

HUMAN BODY AND HEALTH

- *My Feet, My Hands, My Five Senses* by Aliki (Crowell)
- *When I See My Dentist* by Susan Kuklin (Bradbury Press)
- *When I See My Doctor* by Susan Kuklin (Bradbury Press)

SELF IMAGE

- *Dandelion* by Don Freeman (Viking Press)
- *The Mixed-Up Chameleon* by Eric Carle (Crowell)
- *Something Special* by David McPhail (Joy Street Books)

COOPERATION

- *Allie Gives a Hand* by Shirley Hughes (Lothrop Lee & Shepard)
- *Chester's Way* by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow)
- *The Doorbell Rang* by Pat Hutchins (Mulberry Books)

FAMILIES

- *Arthur's Baby* by Marc Brown (Little, Brown) and other titles in the series
- *Bigmama's* by Donald Crews (Greenwillow)
- *Our Granny* by Margaret Wild (Ticknor & Fields)

MULTICULTURAL

- *In Anybody Up?* by Ellen Kandoian (Putnam)
- *This Is the Way We Eat Our Lunch* by Edith Baer (Scholastic)

STILL IN THE

BOOK CORNER

A CENTER BASED ON A BOOK

by Sandra Malcolm

Children need opportunities to freely interact with at least some of the books we read with them. A variety of materials should be available to stimulate thinking and creativity. On the next page, you will find a selection of books from the FRANKLIN series that lend themselves well to becoming a learning center. Below are suggestions for developing a center based on these books. This is only one example of a literature-based learning center. Use your imagination to create others.

Directions for FRANKLIN'S PLACE Learning Center

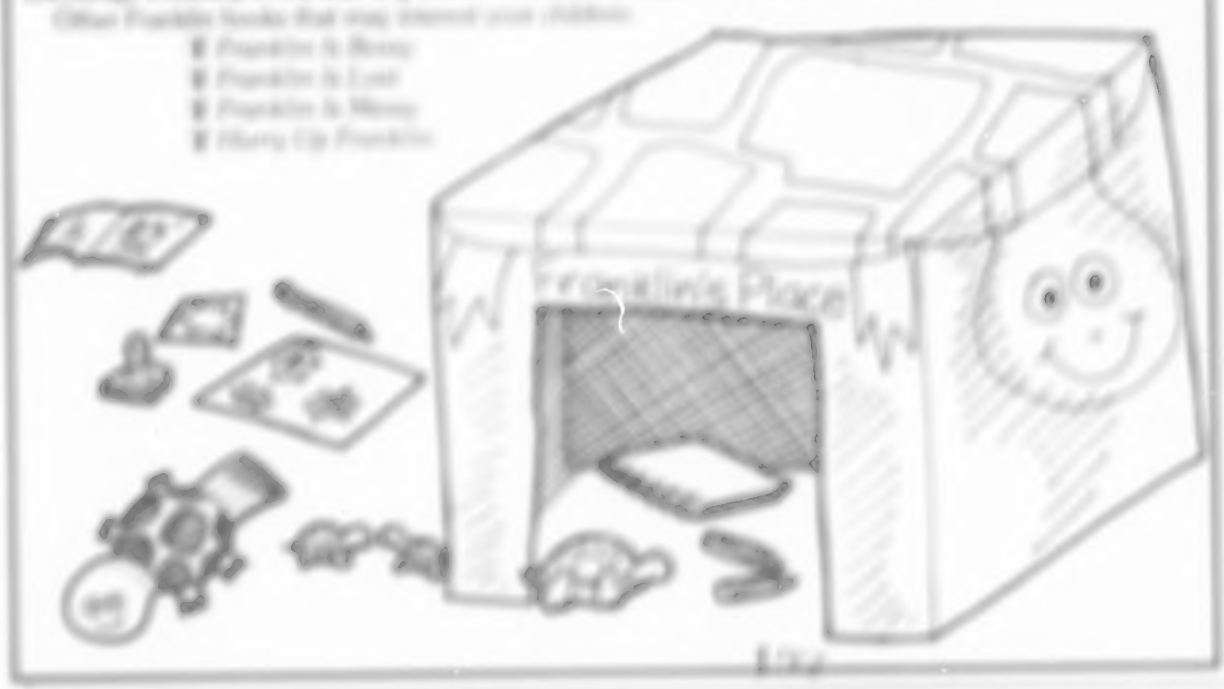
Make a learning center in a large cardboard box decorated on the outside to look like a turtle shell or by draping a sheet decorated to look like a turtle shell over a table.

Introduce each book along with a turtle puppet, a stuffed turtle, or a turtle figurine. Following the reading of a Franklin book, add the book and the turtle to the learning center. Make a tape of each book to allow children to listen again to their favorite story. Encourage children to go into FRANKLIN'S PLACE to listen to the story on tape, share a book with a friend, or "write" their own Franklin stories. (They could also draw a picture and dictate the text to an adult.)

Supply the learning center with a variety of turtles, writing material, turtle stencils, turtle stamps, and stickers, etc. Also include reference materials about real turtles to stimulate research about a pet turtle. Encourage creativity in the learning center. Share all products of FRANKLIN'S PLACE.

Other Franklin books that may interest your children:

- *Franklin Is Bossy*
- *Franklin Is Lost*
- *Franklin Is Messy*
- *Hurry Up Franklin*



FRANKLIN IN THE DARK

by Paulette Bourgeois (Scholastic) tells of a turtle named Franklin who is afraid to go into his shell because he is afraid of the dark. His mother helps him cope with his fear.

BEFORE READING, ask children what people might be afraid of. List these on chart paper. Ask whether or not they think animals are afraid of things. Why? What would animals be afraid of? Show a turtle (stuffed animal, puppet, a real turtle borrowed from a pet store). Ask children why a turtle might be afraid.

AFTER READING, ask children if they think this story is true or make-believe. Why? What were the animals in the story afraid of? Why was it a problem for each animal? What if a snake was afraid to go underground? How would you help him cope with his fear? How can we help people who are afraid of something?

FRANKLIN PLAYS THE GAME

by Paulette Bourgeois (Scholastic) tells how Franklin loves to play soccer, but has difficulty kicking the ball straight. He discovers that teamwork is better than individual effort.

BEFORE READING, share with children something that you like to do, but are not very good at. Ask others to share their stories. Talk about team sports and the value of working together. Present situations that would require teamwork for children to act out (lifting a heavy box, riding a seesaw).

AFTER READING, ask children if they have played games where they have kicked a ball. Ask, *"Why was it a problem that Franklin could not kick the ball straight?" "Why was scoring a goal so important to Franklin?"*

FRANKLIN FIBS

by Paulette Bourgeois (Scholastic) tells how Franklin fibs to his friends about being able to eat seventy-six flies. He finds a way of succeeding, but decides that fibbing is not right.

BEFORE READING, ask children if they know what a fib is. (List ideas on chart paper.) Discuss the ideas they presented. Tell children that the character in the story tells all of his friends that he can eat seventy-six flies. Do they think that is a fib? Why?

AFTER READING, ask children what happened when Franklin told his fib. Ask, *"Did Franklin feel good about his fib? Why or why not?" "What happened when he told his parents?" "How do you think his friends felt when he fibbed to them?"*

FRANKLIN WANTS A PET

by Paulette Bourgeois (Scholastic) is the story of Franklin who is tired of having a stuffed animal for a pet. He begs his parents for a real pet. They are surprised by his choice.

BEFORE READING, ask children to tell about their pets if they have them. Make a graph of favorite pets. Name animals that would make good pets. (Write these on chart paper.) Vote on favorites to complete the graph.

AFTER READING, ask: *"What did Franklin's parents say about him getting a pet?" "What did they keep telling him?" "Has this ever happened to you? When?" "When Franklin's parents said that he could have a pet, were they surprised at what he said about each animal? Why?" "Franklin wanted a certain kind of pet. What was it? Why do you think he wanted this one and no other?" "How would you care for each kind of pet mentioned in the story?"*

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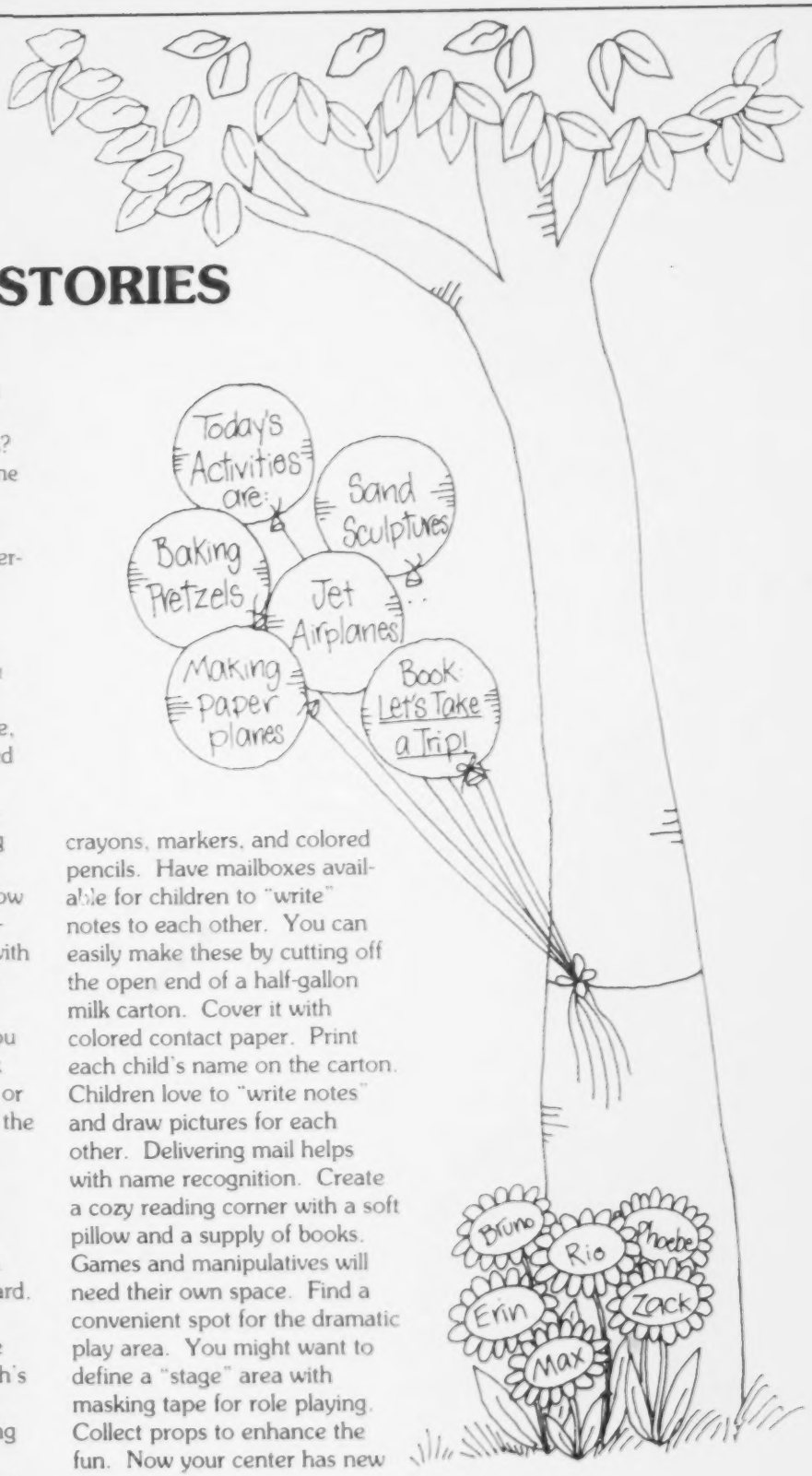
STEP INTO STORIES

by Barbara Fischer

Are your learning centers a bit frayed around the edges? Do they seem tired and lifeless? Do they make you feel the same way? Create a center with a new approach. Invite your children to step into the wonderful world of Winnie the Pooh and friends.

Let the much loved story friends from *Winnie the Pooh* by A. A. Milne (Hal Leonard) help you create a multipurpose, literature-based center designed to meet your specific needs. This center can reinforce concepts from your other learning areas through stories and creative play. Or you could borrow concepts from your other centers and implement learning with literature. Or you can be creative and work a curriculum around Winnie the Pooh. (You might try wordless books, folk tales, myths, nursery rhymes, or alphabet books as themes for the literature center.)



HOW TO BEGIN

Paint or construct a large tree for Pooh and friends in a corner or on your bulletin board. A group of colorful balloons around the tree announce the daily activity. Flowers in Pooh's corner will be a place for the names of children participating in your center. Provide a writing table with paper, pencils, crayons, markers, and colored pencils. Have mailboxes available for children to "write" notes to each other. You can easily make these by cutting off the open end of a half-gallon milk carton. Cover it with colored contact paper. Print each child's name on the carton. Children love to "write notes" and draw pictures for each other. Delivering mail helps with name recognition. Create a cozy reading corner with a soft pillow and a supply of books. Games and manipulatives will need their own space. Find a convenient spot for the dramatic play area. You might want to define a "stage" area with masking tape for role playing. Collect props to enhance the fun. Now your center has new life and so do you.

MONTHLY THEME

Welcome children and invite them to sit in a circle for a theme-related story, whether fiction or nonfiction. Try to include both types in your planning. Expand the story with a discussion followed by a simple related hands-on activity. You might begin with a story about airplanes if your theme is transportation. Provide several kinds of toy airplanes for children to handle and to ask questions about each plane does. Follow this activity by asking children to dictate a sentence about one of the airplanes. Let them illustrate their words. Use the dramatic play area to role play pilots and passengers.

BORROWED CONCEPTS

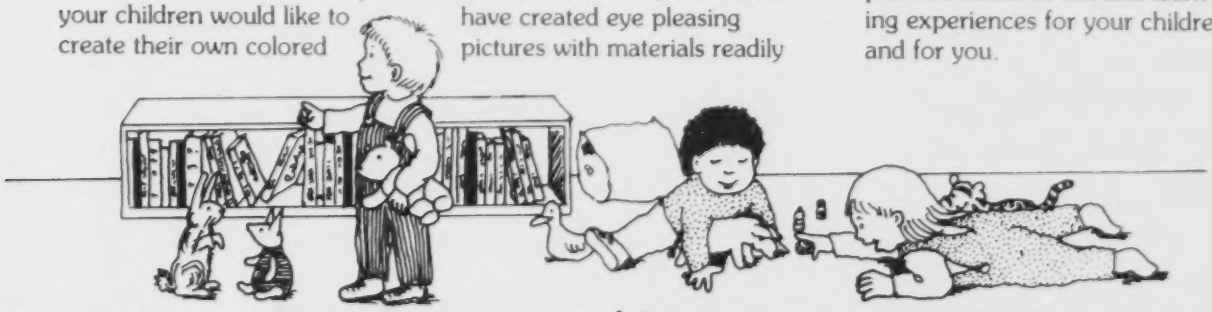
Reinforce ideas from other areas through stories. If you choose to spend some time on math, begin by reading a pattern book and follow this with a hands-on sequencing activity with colored blocks. Perhaps your children would like to create their own colored patterns at the writing table. Children might move on to the dramatic play area and become patterns themselves. For this activity, cut squares of colored construction paper using three different colors. Invite children to choose one of the colored squares. Ask if they can make a repeating pattern using their colors. You might have children stand in a line; the first two would have red squares, the next child could have blue, the next two would have red, and so on. Next try making a pattern using all three colors. See how many patterns children can create.

CREATE YOUR OWN THEME

Let your imagination soar! What wonderful ideas would your children like to explore? Would they like to experiment with different art techniques? Think of all those illustrators who make picture books so appealing to the young set. Eric Carle, Leo Lionni, and others have created eye pleasing pictures with materials readily found at school. Look at the front book jacket or the end paper for an explanation of their art. Read one of these books, then invite your children to do their own art using these same materials. Have colored squares of paper ready to create mosaics as Leo Lionni does in many of his stories. Try using fingerpaint and tempera paint as Eric Carle uses in his books.

There are many other ideas to try—music, space, growing things, friendship—the list is endless. Have fun doing your own theme and don't forget Winnie the Pooh and Friends. That wonderful book contains many short stories that have possibilities for center activities: "Eeyore's Birthday Party," "The Blustery Day," and "Pooh's Honey Pot" are just a few.

Enjoy using literature learning center to tie your curriculum together or shine by itself as a center. Whatever you choose, children's literature will promise hours of fun and learning experiences for your children and for you.



CREATE YOUR OWN CENTER MATERIALS

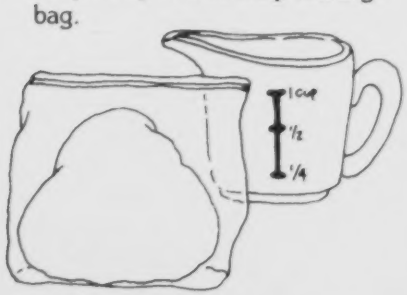
by Gail P. Jones

Have you ever felt like you could use a helpful hand or two when starting a new theme or unit? Well, they're right under your nose! Your children can not only create the bulletin board borders, the classroom environment and the table spot decorations, but also the center materials as well! At the end of each unit and into the beginning of the next one, use center time activities to create materials for the next theme or unit. For example, if "All About Me" is your September unit, during the last week offer the opportunity to create watercolors in the Nature and Science Center calling it "I Can Create Colors!" Create a recipe card such as the one below for children to follow.

Children will delight in measuring and mixing the paints which then can be used in the October Art Center for creating fall pictures. After children create the watercolors, they could go to a writing center and create names for the colors they created and print labels for the paints! Another time they might wish to make scented paints.

"I Can Create Play Dough!"

Children can also make individual bags of sculpturing dough to use in a center by mixing two coffee scoops of flour, one scoop of salt and one scoop of water. Knead and put in a zip-locking bag. If regular play dough is needed, children can measure and mix the ingredients and the teacher can cook it during rest time. The best recipe for play dough is two cups flour, one cup salt, four teaspoons of cream of tartar, two cups of water, and two tablespoons of salad oil. (Food coloring can be added also.) Mix all ingredients and (ADULT does the cooking.) cook in a large saucepan on low heat until lumpy. Turn out on aluminum foil and knead when cool. This keeps very well in a zip locking bag.



I Can Help A Lot!

☆ Children can change the books in the Reading Center for the next theme and arrange them by size on shelves. They love to make library cards and pockets!

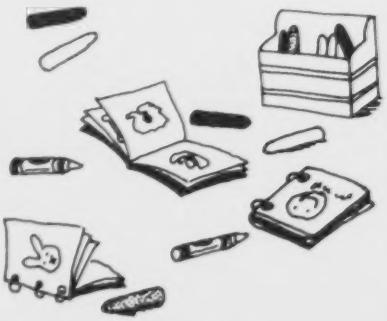
☆ If you need bulletin board borders, let children use stickers to create patterns to go with the unit or create appropriate objects in the Art Center. Children can also cut paper to smaller sizes for use in the Art and Writing Centers!

☆ Fours and fives love to use the hole-puncher! Put dots on oak tag shapes and let them punch the holes to use as sewing cards in the next theme's small motor center. And you could make cards shaped like shirts or shoes and put them in the housekeeping center to be laced.

☆ Let children roll up balls of yarn from skeins so that the yarn is ready for your next project. Place the balls in a large oatmeal container with holes for each color and you'll have an instant yarn dispenser.

☆ Many stencils can be cut out for the Art Center by children.

☆ And, by drawing or tracing theme-related objects on oak tag with glue from small bottles of Elmer's Glue, children can make stencils. When the glue is dry, children can place regular paper on top of the glue stencil and rub over them with the side of a crayon. These are especially useful for difficult-to-draw things such as dinosaurs.



☆ If you feel you need more classroom books on a new theme, let children create books for the Reading Center with pictures that can be glued on numbered pages, then labeled and laminated by a teacher. Children can also make class telephone and address books for centers such as the Post Office or Communications Center.

There is no end to the number of ways children can use centers to create materials for other centers.... Just stop and think, *"What do I need?"* Then sit back and watch children take pride in making and using materials they created!

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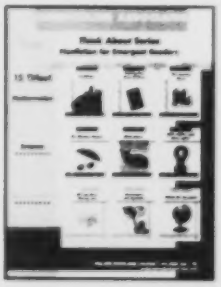

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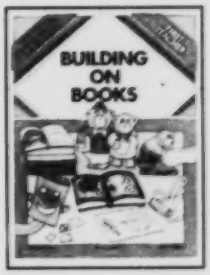

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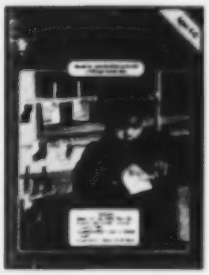

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Vol. 19 No. 6 *For People Who Care for Young Children* November/December 1998

THEME:

Holiday Magic

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Enjoy the Magic of Giving
- De-Stressing the Holidays
- Create Super Science Centers
- "Over the River" and Other Thanksgiving Activities
- Exploring Holidays in Different Cultures
- Making Scent-sible Gifts
- Planning Happy Holiday Parties
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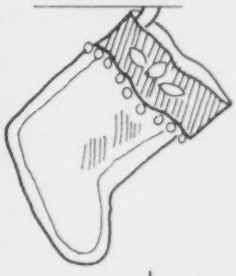

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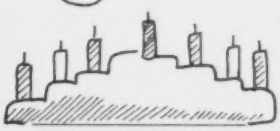

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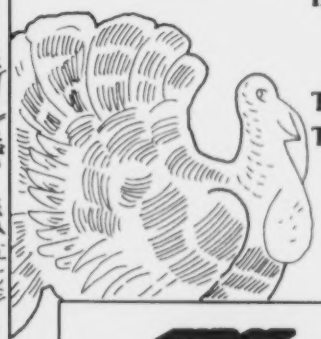

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

by Lisa L. Durkin

We are entering a magic season. At this time of year, everyone seems to become more thoughtful, kind, and caring. With young children, we need to emphasize getting satisfaction from giving, getting enjoyment from the sensory pleasures of the season—not just getting gifts. So, in this issue of *First Teacher*, we talk about the glitter in a child's eye when she gives a special gift to an elderly friend or even a pet; the glow that comes from the warmth of family gatherings at Thanksgivings and holiday parties for the "classroom family"; the gleam of candles, the smell of cinnamon, pine, and apple sauce; the tastes of traditional holiday dishes; the sound of bells and festive songs.

Throughout the issue, we emphasize the need to tone down the excitement and anticipation factors that can make these times more stressful than magical for young children. The articles by Susan Entz and Barbara Backer speak specifically to this problem. Keeping holiday events short, maintaining a normal schedule wherever possible, preparing children in advance, but not too far in advance for special occasions, and interspersing planned and "random" acts of kindness throughout the holiday season are a just few of their suggestions.

Jeannine Perez says that the magic comes from a combination of *"tradition, sharing, and surprises."* Thanksgiving is full of traditions begun by the Pilgrims and continued through our history in songs such as "Over the River and Through the Wood" a poem written in 1844. Tania Cowling uses the poem as the springboard to many fun, learning activities. And don't forget holiday traditions in other cultures. Suggestions *In the Book Corner* will help you share these traditions with your children.

In "The Magic of Giving," Karen Stephens demonstrates how children can share their joy and enthusiasm with those who help them or who are less fortunate than they are. From bird feeders to "hug coupons," children will feel the magic as they share it with others.

For young children who have not experienced many holidays, surprises abound at this time of year. From plants that bloom in the cold of winter to greeting cards made with magnets, we add some new developmentally appropriate surprises that preschoolers will love.

Wouldn't it be terrific if this "holiday magic" lasted all year long? Barbara Fischer thinks it can if you recycle favorite decorations, plant friendship gardens, and read and discuss books such as *The Giving Tree* throughout the year. Her article includes even more special ideas.

So help your children create their own special magic this year, as well as appreciating the magic created by others. The magic of kindness, thoughtfulness, and caring can last a lifetime.

Upcoming Themes:

JANUARY?FEBRUARY:
Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

MARCH/APRIL:
Terrific Tools

MAY/JUNE:
Alive and Growing

JULY/AUGUST:
Outdoor Arts

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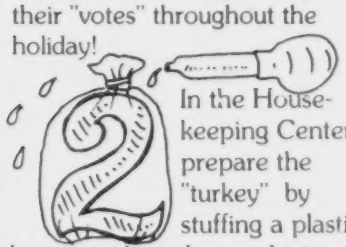
HELPFUL HINTS

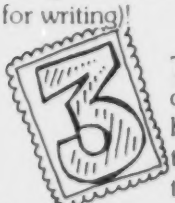
ALL THAT GLITTERS...

by Gail Jones

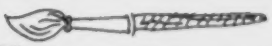
The months of November and December are full of exciting holidays and activities for which you'll need to make a lot of decisions! Let your children know their opinions count by making a voting booth for registering their "votes" throughout the holiday!

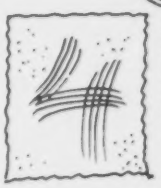


In the Housekeeping Center, prepare the "turkey" by stuffing a plastic brown garbage bag and tying it shut. Place it in a large roaster or the sink and surround it with water. Give your children turkey basters to keep the turkey moist. They love it once they master the technique (not to mention strengthening the muscles they will use for writing)!

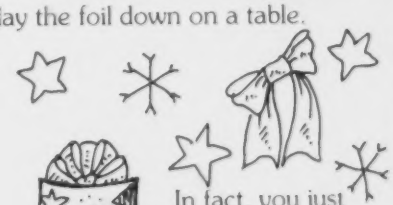


Take pictures during all the holiday preparations and keep them for a booklet for next year's class (and for you to remember good ideas). Use them with this year's class for recording story ideas and to review and remember the fun!

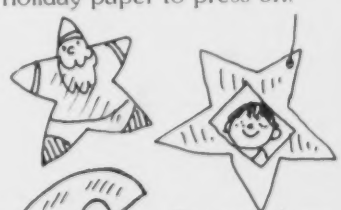




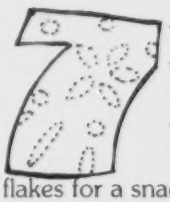
For magical art experiences, why not cover the easels with foil and let children paint on it adding glitter before it dries. Put a tray under the easel to catch the extra glitter or lay the foil down on a table.



In fact, you just can't have enough glitter! For younger children, cover a table with contact paper (sticky side up) and give them holiday ribbons, stars, and scraps of holiday paper to press on!



Cut out a large supply of plain, large, five-pointed stars to turn into photo ornaments and star Santas. (Points of the star become the head, arms and legs.) Photo stars can also be made from the six-pointed stars for Hanukkah!



To welcome winter in a magical way, why not try these "magical" snowflakes for a snack? Give each child a large, round, chocolate cookie. Place a small doily on top of each cookie and let children sprinkle confectioner's sugar all over the top. Remove the doily for the magical snowflake!

Make a journal for children to record their feelings about the holidays as well as those of their family and friends. Let each child decorate his covers with his favorite holiday symbols!

The magic of the holidays will happen with careful planning. Be sure to include 'stress-busters" such as soft music and tactile pillows, soft animals and art supplies!

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WHERE THE MAGIC LIES

by Jeannine Perez

During holidays everyone becomes more thoughtful, kind, and caring. The magic of holiday traditions is the sweet frosting on a birthday cake; happy times creating memories that become bright patterns in the fabric of our lives.

True holidaymagic seems to have three primary elements—tradition, sharing, and surprise. We all love the anticipation and security in familiar traditions that make us feel a part of a family or community, and in the sharing of gifts and time and love. We also love unexpected surprises. Weave all three strands into your plans and create some holiday magic.

TRADITION

Begin by sharing your own memories and some silly traditions from your childhood during circle time. Give children time to share and then tell them that some traditions are so old that no one can remember how they began; other traditions are brand new; we can even start our own traditions. Ask your children to describe some of the things they do with their families. Do they go out for a walk together? Out for pizza on Friday nights? Make up a song about families doing things together to the tune of "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush."

This is the way we go for a walk, go for a walk, go for a walk. (Act out walking around the room.)
This is the way we go for a walk.
We're a family!

Make up other verses, with suggestions from our children for words and actions (*ride in a car, clean the house, go to the park*).

Collect large pictures from magazines of families celebrating holidays (Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, birthdays, Christmas, summer picnics, and vacations). Compare and contrast by asking your children what they think each family is doing in the pictures, and how that is the same or different from their own family traditions. Talk about the similarities in holidays (the good feelings inside, eating tasty foods, having fun with others).

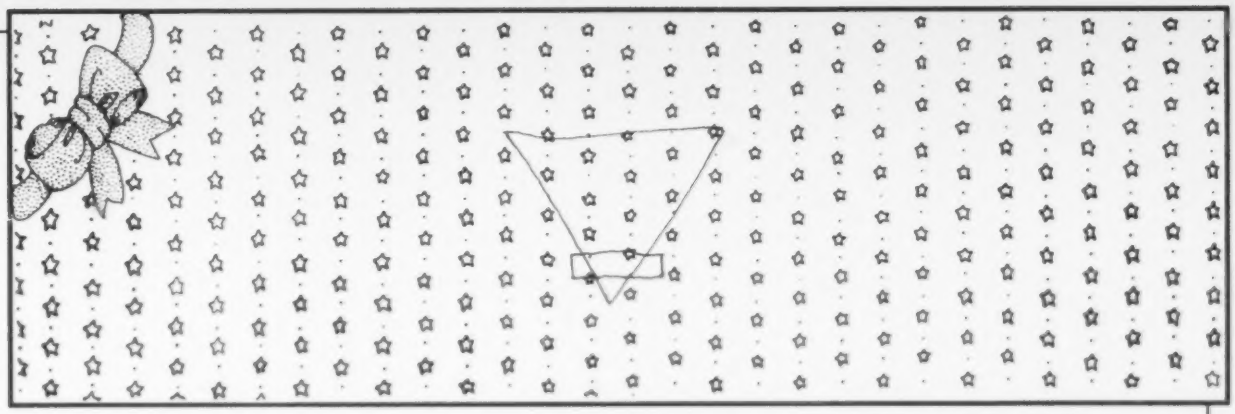
When talking about family traditions, be very sensitive to children who may not have experienced strong family traditions or even the warmth and diverse needs and experiences of an extended family. Your room can provide its own rich traditions for these children. Ask your boys and girls to help you add a new class holiday tradition. Make the tradition simple and easy to do; traditions do not need to be elaborate or complex to give a feeling of warmth and belonging.

SHARING

Sharing and giving are very important ingredients in holiday magic. The earlier children become aware of the joys of giving, the more altruistic and empathic they will become.

Holiday magic is enhanced by dressing up and decorating our homes, school, the streets, and ourselves. It is a part of sharing the joy of the season with those around us. Begin creating magic by decorating your room with special art projects to set the scene for celebrating. Involve your children in brainstorming ideas and decorating your room with a winter theme.

Transform one bulletin board into a giant gift package. Put a picture of a gift (drawn or cut from a magazine) on the bulletin board, then cover the picture with wrapping paper, burlap, or fabric. Cut a six-inch triangle flap over the picture, then tape it closed. Crisscross ribbon across the giant gift, and add a big bow slightly off center to make it look real. Ask your children to look through old magazines and cut out what they think might be in the package, or ask them to draw pictures of the unknown gift. Help them



glue their pictures on six-by six-inch squares of bright colored paper and attach them as a border to the top and bottom of the bulletin board. All week, make guesses and predictions about what's inside the package. On Friday, make a big production of opening the triangle window and ask children to describe what they see. At the end of the day, secretly put a new picture behind the tab for the next week.

Learning about the traditions of other cultures is a wonderful form of sharing. On December 5, talk about Saint Nicholas Day celebrated in some European countries. In Holland, children set their shoes outside the door filled with straw and carrots for Sinterklaas' snow-white horse. Small gifts are hidden with rhyming clues. Sometimes the gifts are even hidden in a loaf of bread. Draw pictures of fancy shoes filled with goodies and make silly clues for a treasure hunt.

Celebrate in the Southwestern and Mexican tradition by breaking a piñata. Help children make piñatas several weeks before your party by covering balloons with four or five layers of newspaper that have been dipped in wallpaper paste or liquid starch. Turn the piñatas several time while drying.

Decorate the dried piñatas with paints or with tissue paper strips, fill one of them with treats and hang the rest as ceiling decorations. On party day, let children try to break the filled piñata with a plastic bat. (Be sure everyone else is well out of the way.) When the pinata is broken, everyone shares the treats.

Make sparkle snow scenes for cards. Of course you will need special cards to accompany the gifts you've made, and these are fun to do. Mix equal parts of salt, flour, and water and put some of the mixture in squeeze bottles. Add tempera paints if you want color, but the salt does dry with a glitter. Shake well, and squeeze the paint onto paper. Help children make Star of David designs on blue paper, snow scenes on black or dark blue paper, or color the paint green and draw Christmas trees on white paper, then add bright colored paper balls when the paint is dry.

SURPRISES

The element of surprise is an important key to magic. Provide a surprise of some sort each morning when children arrive. It may be as simple as altering the arrangement of the room, or adding a new plant or colorful poster on the wall. A surprise could be added at snack time. Mix a new and different crunchy filling for sandwiches, or cut them in half horizontally and spread cream cheese frosting in the middle instead of on top.

Make huge storytelling balls to unwrap and unroll surprise gifts for your room. (You can do this instead of planning individual prizes. This works well because everyone is excited and happy to have new things to share.) Your surprises should be small and very simple. Collect an object for each child to unwrap; a fancy eraser for your art center, a shell for the science area, a tiny magnifying glass that gives a bug's eye view of the world, a new chunky crayon in metallic colors, a small bag of raisins; a tiny book. Start with the biggest item for the center and keep wrapping surprises as you wind the ball with crepe paper strips or strips of fabric torn from old clothes or rags. Use the same strips later as ribbons for wrapping gifts. Just be sure that everyone gets a chance to participate.

The scent of spices, greens, and good things to eat, the soft sounds of music and laughter, your decorated room, and sharing of gifts all blend into magic that you and your children will remember.

STRESS-LESS HOLIDAYS

by Susan Entz

Have you been looking forward to the joys of the holiday season, only to be confronted with whining children, argumentative parents, and stressed out co-workers? Perhaps it is time to rethink your approach to "the holidays."

There are things that can be done to put celebrations into perspective, reduce stress, and return the sense of joy to the holidays. The key is to turn down the emotional volume of the overall season while highlighting specific, targeted activities. Here are some suggestions.

☆ **Shorten the length of the celebration period.** Young children do not have a well developed sense of time. When they see Christmas decorations or Kwanzaa symbols in the stores before Halloween, they are rightfully confused about when each holiday occurs. Let them know that the holiday is still a long way off.

☆ **Target holiday activities.** If your school includes holiday activities, plan the fall schedule so that holiday activities are targeted for the few days immediately preceding the event. Be sure to include a full range of engaging non-holiday themes prior to the celebrations.

☆ **Make a calendar of important events.** Make a continuous horizontal calendar for the classroom, with one month flowing into the next. Place symbols for various events that are planned for the fall months. As children ask about a particular holiday, show them where they are now and how far away that special day really is. Also add other special events or themes to the calendar that will be studied in the interim.

☆ **Maintain a normal schedule.** Youngsters do best when their lives are predictable. Maintain a normal schedule of events at a school and encourage the parents to do the same at home. It is especially important to maintain a regular meal time and bedtime. Tired children are crabby children. If a special event is to be added to the day, schedule it late in the morning. Then maintain the daily sequence of activities, but shorten each time block slightly. That way, children have the sense of security, while benefiting from the special event.

☆ **Prepare children.** When a shift of schedule is necessary, alert children ahead of time so they are ready for the change.

☆ **Incorporate holiday activities into the regular classroom routine.** Rather than substituting special events, extend the holiday theme into existing school procedures. Make a matching game with Christmas trees, sort Kwanzaa symbols, add a dreidel game to the small muscle activities and incorporate music from a wide variety of winter holidays.

☆ **Be realistic.** How many things can reasonably done in the time available? Avoid unnecessary stress created by trying to include every possible activity.

☆ **Arrange for extra help.** Some of the strain of this season can be lessened by recruiting volunteers. An extra pairs of hands means that you don't have to be "super-teacher," attending to each child's needs at once. It also means that children avoid the negative behaviors that go along with having to wait to finish that special project that *must* go home today.

☆ **Plan random acts of kindness.** Counteract the "give-me's" by engaging children in a few random acts of kindness. Plan a visit to a

neighboring senior center or make a class gift for that special bus driver, secretary, or custodian.

☆ **Invite family participation.** Each family is a treasure-trove of special holiday traditions. Invite family members to share foods, costumes, music and activities from their heritage with the class.

☆ **Provide information.** The holiday season can be stressful for parents as well. Use your knowledge of child development and each child's current interests and ability levels to suggest low cost, but effective, toys that can be included on the shopping list. Send home suggestions for simple activities parents can do together with their child. (SEE PAGES 32-35)

☆ **Staff time-out.** Give staff members a small break from the pre-holiday frenzy. Arrange for a volunteer to watch children during nap one day and bring in lunch for the staff. Their renewed spirit will be communicated to the children in their care.

☆ **Take time to have fun.** It is easy to get so caught up in the frenzy of activity that we forget to enjoy it. Plan time to interact with children and see the holidays through the magic in their eyes.

HOLIDAY HUG

As you play holiday music, have children dance around.

When the music stops, each child finds a partner and gives him a hug.

The music then continues with each set of partners dancing together until the music again stops.

This time each set of partners finds another set of partners and everyone hugs. This continues on until everyone is joined in one big hug.

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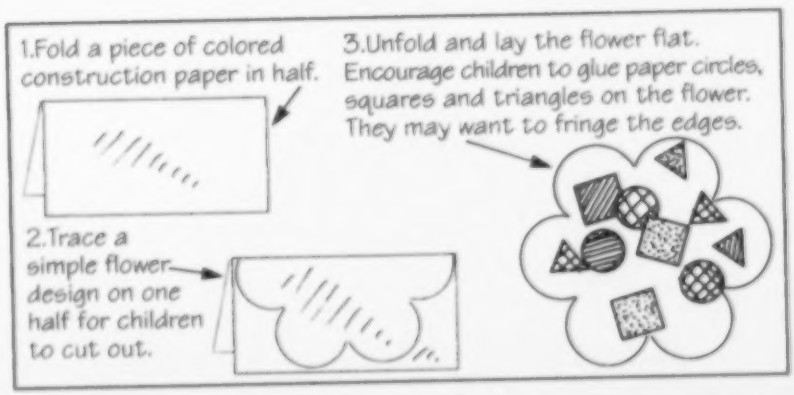
HOLIDAY MAGIC ALL YEAR LONG

by Barbara Fischer

Holiday decorations have a glow all their own. Lights twinkle, paper chains cascade down walls, and children's handcrafted projects add a special charm to the season. Sometimes teachers feel a twinge of sadness when everything must be put away for another year. Even children are reluctant to let go of the season. Maybe the decorations have to go, but you can hold onto that wonderful holiday magic all year long by sharing with others. The activities you do at holiday time can be shared throughout the year; for the real magic of the season is in the sharing.


1.Fold a piece of colored construction paper in half.
2.Trace a simple flower design on one half for children to cut out.
3.Unfold and lay the flower flat. Encourage children to glue paper circles, squares and triangles on the flower. They may want to fringe the edges.

PAPER CUT ART

This type of art is an old tradition in Poland. Children cut paper flowers, snowflakes, and ornaments to decorate their homes. When Christmas is over, the decorations are saved and used to decorate other rooms in the house. To make these decorations, fold a piece of colored construction paper in half. Trace a simple flower design on one half for children to cut out. Unfold and lay the flower flat. Encourage children to glue paper circles, squares and triangles on the flower. They may want to fringe the edges. These flowers add sparkle to your bulletin boards, walls, and holiday tree.

Cutting white paper snowflakes will give children additional scissors skills. Hang these on your tree along with some Polish paper ornaments. These ornaments are a variation of the snowflake. Begin with a circle instead of a square piece of colored paper. Invite children to cut two identical designs as you would for a snowflake. Open and place a different colored circle between them. Glue together sandwich style. Punch a hole in the top and hang on your tree. Finish your decorations with colorful paper chains. Let children take these decorations home to brighten their rooms.

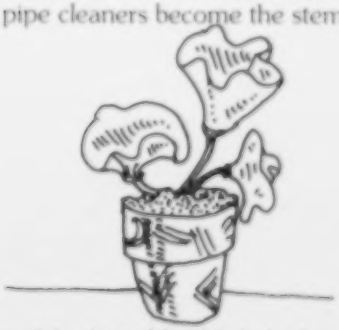
THE GIVING TREE

Read *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein. (Harper & Row). Invite each child to cut out a small tree. Show them how to fold green paper in half and cut zigzags for branches. Assist children to write a few lines about something they will do for their family all year long: putting toys away after playing, keeping their room picked up, helping with a pet, etc. Encourage children to plan their own gift. Place these trees unfolded on the bulletin board in the form of a large holiday tree or perhaps a dreidel for Hanukkah. Each child will take her tree home after the holidays.

DAY BRIGHTENERS

Brighten someone's day at holiday time and all year long with some creative handmade gifts. Purchase some small inexpensive flower pots for children to paint with bright colors. (If they are clay pots, bake in the oven at 200° F for an hour to remove the moisture before painting.)

Fill with a bouquet of coffee filter flowers. To make these flowers, fold the filter in half three times. Have several dishes of water colors available. Dip the tip in one color, remove and dip it deeper into another color. Turn the filter upside down and dip again. Lay it flat on paper towels. When dry, twist at the center and gently pull out edges to make a flower shape. Green pipe cleaners become the stems.



A basket of freshly baked cookies is sure to put a smile on someone's face. Bake and decorate sugar cookies. Place them in a "basket" made from cut down milk cartons. Be imaginative when decorating these. Construction paper, colored tissue paper, or wallpaper are but a few things to use to make your basket special. Fill with yummy cookies for parents and friends.

Extend your baking experiences to other times of the year. Let the basket decoration reflect the season.

GROW A FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

Tulips for Valentine's Day? Sweet William for Mother's Day? Yes, it may be November, but you can think hearts and flowers for spring. Plant tulip bulbs in milk cartons and place outside in a dark corner. Cover with heavy cardboard to keep the light out. Be sure to remove the cover for a while when it rains. Don't forget to water if the cartons are kept inside. Take care of them and they will be blooming by Valentine's Day. A great gift for someone special. After the holidays, start some Sweet William seeds and Alyssum seeds. Young gardeners can care for these plants during the winter. Transplant the young plants into decorated pots. The flowers make welcome Mother's Day gifts.

HAVE A PLANT FESTIVAL

Now that your young gardeners have had some planting and growing experience, why not hold a plant festival? In early spring, start some pepper, squash, pumpkins, marigolds, and dahlias in peat pots or cut down 1/2 gallon milk cartons. Be sure to punch holes in the milk cartons for drainage. During the growing process, show pictures of the vegetables and flowers that you plant. Be sure to discuss what seeds need to grow into healthy plants.

If you use these plants to start your school's garden, share your harvest with family and friends. Perhaps children would like to take these home for family gardens. Do involve children in the weeding, watering and caring of their plants. Another idea that might appeal to children is to grow their plants for a plant sale during the summer. Children can arrange spaces for their potted plants and make plant signs. Invite parents and friends to purchase plants for their gardens. This just might become a summer tradition at your school.

Many of the fun things you do at holiday time can be enjoyed throughout the year. Share your gifts with others and sprinkle holiday magic twelve months of the year.

"OVER THE RIVER"

by Tania K. Cowling

During the month of November, we celebrate the joys of Thanksgiving. To coincide with this holiday at school, focus on activities that relate to the famous book, *Over the River and Through the Wood* and the traditional song of the same name. The poem "Over the River and Through the Wood" was originally titled " A Boy's Thanksgiving Day" published in 1844 in *Flowers For Children* by Lydia Maria Child (1802-1880). The new book, *Over the River and Through the Wood* is beautifully illustrated by Nadine Bernard Wescott (HarperCollins).

I'M THANKFUL

Thanksgiving is a time for giving thanks. Long ago, Pilgrims and Native Americans worked together to host the first Thanksgiving. Today, we celebrate this holiday with family, relatives, and friends. At circle time, discuss "*things I'm thankful for.*" Look through magazines and cut out pictures of these items. Have children bring in pictures of their family, including grandparents. Create a bulletin board or poster. The following recording enhances this activity: "Things I'm Thankful For" in *Holiday Songs and Rhymes* by Hap Palmer.

IN THE PUMPKIN PATCH

The Thanksgiving season is a good time to do pumpkin activities. A pumpkin pie, flavorful with spices, is traditional in many American homes.

Take a pumpkin and cut off the top. Invite children to look at the pumpkin talking about its color and shape. Look inside at the strings and seeds. Does the outside and inside look the same? How does it smell? Scrape off the pumpkin "meat" to use in baking Pumpkin Bread.

Then can cut pieces of the pumpkin shell into shapes. Take a paintbrush and paint a thin layer of tempera on the shape. Press this down onto paper to make a print. Printing is a fascinating activity for children because they love to keep repeating this process.

Another sensual activity is to paint pumpkin pies. Cut paper into circle shapes and paint them orange. While the paint is still wet, sprinkle an assortment of spices like nutmeg, cinnamon, allspice, or ground cloves on the pie. Smell the aroma!

Clean and roast the pumpkin seeds. Place a few into cups for the children. They can count the seeds and then eat them as a nutritious snack.

GRANDMOTHER & GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE:

Help children glue popsicle (craft) sticks down on construction paper in the shape of a house. Give them crayons or markers to fill in the details, like windows, doors, chimney, etc.

TERRIFIC TURKEYS:

Create these hanging turkeys to decorate your classroom. Bend a wire coat hanger into a circle with the hanging hook at the top. Pass a "leg" of pantyhose around the circle. Help children cut eyes, beak, wattle, feet, and feathers from construction paper or felt. Glue these features onto the nylon turkey. Real feathers could also be used. The turkey is ready to hang and is such a symbolic reminder of Thanksgiving.

▶ Take an exercise break and let children do the "turkey strut." Give verbal instructions to waddle like a turkey as if he was:

- a fat turkey
- a slow turkey
- a happy turkey
- a fast turkey
- a sad turkey
- a tired turkey
- a silly turkey
- ADD MORE ORIGINAL COMMANDS!

Pumpkin Muffins

You'll Need: 3 eggs ◆ 1 cup peanut oil ◆ 4 cups sugar ◆ 29-ounce can of pureed pumpkin ◆ 5 cups unbleached white flour ◆ 1 tablespoon baking soda ◆ 1 tablespoon cinnamon ◆ 2 teaspoons ground cloves ◆ 1 1/2 teaspoons salt ◆ butter, oil or muffin cups

What to Do:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Mix pumpkin, eggs, sugar, and peanut oil with electric mixer in large bowl. (Let children take turns mixing with wooden spoon before you use mixer.)
3. Combine flour, baking soda, cinnamon, cloves, and salt in small bowl.
4. Mix flour mixture into pumpkin mixture.
5. Grease muffin tins or use paper muffin cups.
6. Pour batter into tins filling each section three-quarters full.
7. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until tops are golden brown.
8. Remove from oven and let muffins cool.

LET THE WINTER GAMES BEGIN

▶ **Over the River** This is a game that is as traditional as the song itself. In order to get to Grandmother's house, the children must jump over the river. Make a "river" by laying two parallel strips of masking tape on the floor. Line children up and have them take turns jumping over the river. If their feet touch the lines, they will get wet. You can move the "river boundaries" wider apart as the children master this skill.

▶ **Pull the Sled** "The horse knows the way to carry the sleigh through the white and drifted snow!" Use a long jump rope placing several children inside with the rope around them. Choose a driver to hold the two ends of the jump rope. Instruct children to walk slowly around the room, having the driver and the team of horses working together. This is also a fun game to do outside in the snow.

▶ **Warm Mittens** You'll need some warm mittens on your sleigh ride to Grandfather's house! Prepare two paper mittens for each child. Have the children decorate their mittens with colorful crayons. The designs should be the same on both. Take a length of yarn and attach a mitten to each end. Drape this around the child's neck with a mitten hanging down on each side. Encourage the class to design a pair of mittens.

IN THE BOOK CORNER

HOLIDAYS IN DIFFERENT CULTURES

by Karel Kilimnik

Holidays are a way of sharing culture and family traditions. They provide an entry into other peoples' lives. It is a way of drawing families into the classroom as they come in and share their traditions, history and food.

Just remember that to really learn about different people and their cultures you have to explore more than just the holidays. Families are a great resource and feel valued when their lives are shared. Having families come into the classroom is a good way of helping people feel connected to each other as well as creating an atmosphere of respect.

The first group of books focuses on December/January holidays. There is a wonderful book tucked in to help children become friends after an argument because holidays can be stressful with disagreements escalating into separation. The last group of books deals with holidays celebrated by many different cultures all over the world, kind of a peek into others' traditions.

• *Eight Days of Hanukkah* by Harriet Ziefert (Viking) is a brightly illustrated story of a family celebrating the eight days of Hanukkah. It is a nice simple book that presents the symbols. For more detailed information on what the symbols represent I recommend *Hanukkah* by Miriam Nerlove (Albert Whitman & Company).

• Viking has published another holiday book called *Kwanzaa* by Ella Grier. It, like the Hanukkah book, follows an African American family as they celebrate Kwanzaa. At the top of each page, the Principle and symbol for the day is mentioned. Recipes follow the text. For a more in-depth look at the holiday, read *K Is for Kwanzaa* by Juwanda G. Ford (Scholastic) which uses an ABC format for providing more detailed information about Kwanzaa.

• Modern Curriculum Press published its Multicultural Celebrations series on different holidays. These books are often the only ones readily available on holidays such as Cambodian New Year, Korean Children's Day and Three Kings Day.

• January 6th is Three Kings Day, a holiday celebrated by Puerto Rican families to observe the Three Kings visit. *Three King's Day* by Beatriz McConnie Zapater is a story of Melinda's family celebrating this holiday. The author includes a glossary to help us understand different parts of the holiday.

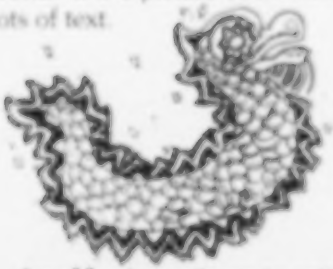
• Even though this book takes place during the summer I had to include it because of its content. *You're Not My Best Friend Anymore* by Charlotte Pomerantz (Dial Books for Young Readers) introduces us to Molly, a young white girl and Ben, an African-American boy, who are best friends. Their families live in a two-family house and they share everything

including their birthday celebrations. One day they argue and get so mad at each other that they are no longer best friends. The holidays are very stressful (before, during, and after) and things may get said to a friend that you regret later. This story takes us through arguing, pouting, and finally reaching out to each other and becoming best friends once again. The story is universal and shows children how to work through some of these very tense feelings.

The following set of books provide an overview of holidays around the world.

I *Celebrate in Central America* by Joe Viesti & Diane Hall (Lothrop, Lee & Shepherd) presents an overview of holidays celebrated in the different countries in Central America. A map in the beginning of the book guides us on our trip through the seven countries. Viesti's lush photographs take us from El Dia De Los Muertos (The Day of the Dead) in Guatemala to Carnival in Panama. His pictures and the brief text provide an introduction to the numerous holidays celebrated in Central America. Find coworkers, families of students, neighbors and friends from these places to help learn more about our neighbors in Central America.

I *Happy New Year!* by Emery Bernhard (Lodestar Books) is an interesting background book. There is a lot of introductory text explaining calendars and why people have chosen different times of the year to celebrate the New Year. We visit, briefly, the United States, Bali, Nigeria, China, Japan, and Southeast Asia. This book presents little snippets of information that can be used to broaden your knowledge of New Year celebrations all over the world. It is a picture book with lots of text.



I Ann Morris continues to write on multicultural issues with *Light the Candle! Bang the Drum!* (Dutton). She surveys holidays from January to December ranging from New Year's Day to St. Patrick's Day to Children's Day to Diwali to Kwanzaa. Colorful pictures combine with simple text to make this book appropriate for young children. She includes more detailed information in a Notes section at the end.

STILL IN THE

THE MAGIC OF THE SEASON

by Sandra L. Malcolm

The holiday season in the months of November and December is celebrated in many different ways by people around the world. However, some of the common threads running through most festivities are music, friendships, family, and fun. No matter what faith or manner of belief, the magic in the celebration can be shared by all. The books in this BOOK CORNER can be introduced as a window into how some families share the magic of their holidays.

MERRY CHRISTMAS STREGA NONA

by Tomie dePaola (Harcourt Brace) tells of a witch named Strega who always has all of the townspeople to her house for a Christmas Eve feast. This year there would be no feast (or so she thought) until big Anthony saves the day.

BEFORE READING, ask children if everyone at their house is very busy right now, baking, decorating and shopping. Why do they think that is? Would you be busy if you were having a party for the whole town? What jobs would you have to do for that many people?

AFTER READING, ask children if Strega Nona could have done all of the work by herself very easily. What could she have used? Why do children think that Strega Nona kept telling Big Anthony, "No. No magic at Christmas time. *Christmas has a magic of its own.*" Do they think Strega Nona was sad to think there would be no Christmas Eve celebration? Why? How do they think Strega Nona felt when she walked into the party planned for her?

ACTIVITIES

- Plan a feast and invite parents or another classroom to attend.
- Write a story titled "Christmas/Hanukkah/Kwanzaa Has a Magic of Its Own." Make a class big book.
- Compare this Tomie dePaola book to others. How are they the same? How are they different?
- Encourage children to make a picture of holiday magic. What would they put in their pictures? Brainstorm ideas as a group.

COUNTRY ANGEL CHRISTMAS

by Tomie dePaola (Putnam) tells of country angels who were asked by St. Nicholas to prepare a heavenly celebration for Christmas Eve. Excluded from helping to prepare the celebration, three small angels find a way to light up the night sky on Christmas Eve.

BEFORE READING, hold the book showing both covers at the same time. This is called a wrap-around cover because it is all one picture. Looking at the covers, ask children what they can tell about this story. Ask children what the title of the story helps them to know about the story.

AFTER READING, look closely at this book and other Tomie dePaola books. If we didn't know the author's name, how would we know these books were by the same author/illustrator? How do you think the three little angels felt when everyone kept telling them they were too young? Has that ever happened to you? Tell us about it. Who was St. Nicholas? Does he have another name?

ACTIVITIES

- Celebrate the magic of the holidays. Have a class meeting to plan the celebration. Brainstorm ideas and decide who does what the best. Write and design invitations to invite parents or another class to your celebration.
- Create items for your celebration from a variety of materials. Learn songs and games to share with others at the celebration. Make refreshments.

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MERRY CHRISTMAS, SPACE CASE

by James Marshall (Dial Books for Young Readers) tells how Buddy McGee eagerly awaited a Christmas visit from his friend, the Thing from Outer Space.

BEFORE READING, ask children if they have ever gone away for Christmas Eve? If someone was coming to your house to visit and you were away, how would you let that person know where you would be? In the story, Buddy has that very problem. He is going to his Grandma's house but he is expecting a very special friend to visit. (Show both covers of the book so they can be seen as one picture.) What can children tell about the story from these covers?

AFTER READING, ask children if they think this was a true story or a make-believe story. Why? How do they think the Thing from Outer Space knew that Buddy was in trouble? Where did the Thing from Outer Space land first? Why did he say the natives didn't have the right Christmas spirit?

ACTIVITIES

- Provide a variety of recycled materials for children to make their own "Thing from Outer Space."
- Encourage children to create their own story about their space creature.
- Problem-solve ways to let a friend know where you are. Let children practice giving directions to a friend.
- Make a class big book by writing another story about the Thing from Outer Space.
- Create a song about the Thing from Outer Space. What would it like to know about your school, community, etc.?
- Make a holiday invitation for the Thing from Outer Space.

CHRISTMAS DRUM

by Maureen Brett Hooper (Boyd Mills Press) tells of a young boy who fills in for his father by playing the drum in the traditional *colindat* on Christmas Eve. (This is a Romanian Christmas tale).

BEFORE READING, ask children to name some things that people do at holiday time. Have any of them ever gone Christmas caroling? Encourage them to tell about it. Sing some holiday songs.

AFTER READING, ask children why Peter was nervous about playing the drum. Have they ever had to do something that they were afraid to do? Encourage them to tell about it. How was it the same or different from Peter's experience? What surprise did Peter have on this Christmas Eve? Not everyone speaks the same language. Several words in the book are Romanian words. (*duba*—drum; *colindat*—caroling). How are these the same as the English words *drum* and *caroling*? How are they different? What other customs (explain the word) did the families have in this story? Were they the same or different than what some of us do at Christmas time? How? What holiday customs do your family have? Why do you think the illustrator used the border that she did around the pages? On the last page, the drum whispered, "*Goodnight, goodnight.*" Do you think that could really happen? Do you think the story was true or make-believe? Why?

ACTIVITIES

- Practice singing holiday songs. Arrange the classroom to resemble separate houses. Go from house to house singing carols. Make arrangements to go caroling somewhere.
- Make holiday cookies or breads to share with others.
- Take turns having someone play the drum (*duba*) as you sing songs. Supply other instruments to be played, also.
- Locate Romania on a globe or world map. Show the distance between where you live and the country of Romania.
- Use stamps and ink pads to create borders around writing paper. Have children create stories on the bordered paper. The bordered paper could be given as gifts if made up into sets of stationary.

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PLANT MAGIC

by Margery A. Kranyik

Bring colorful regional and seasonal blooms and greens into your classroom during the winter season. Ask your local florist, nursery proprietor, or supermarket floral department manager to help you obtain plants and greens inexpensively.

Many winter plants and blooms have ancient religious historical origins. Share whatever information with children is appropriate to your setting. Otherwise, enjoy your indoor winter garden for its color and character.

- **Holly, the best-known winter bush** The English grew holly to protect themselves from witches and angry dogs and to ward off other evil spirits on cold winter nights. Native Americans in New Jersey used the wood from the holly bush for tomahawk handles and tribes in the South drank holly tea to give them strength.

The families of your children may have holly branches in their yard that they may send to class. Children can make sprays and wreaths; trace leaves; or just enjoy a colorful vase or basket full of holly branches. You might give the arrangements to an elderly housing facility or a homeless shelter.

- **Poinsettia** came to us from the United States Ambassador to Mexico, Robert Poinsett. As the blooms come in assorted colors, they make attractive displays on cloudy days. The colored blossoms are actually leaves of the plant. Compare them to the green leaves. Obtain plants in several sizes and colors. Discuss the colors with children and have them draw pictures of the plants. These plants need sunlight, water, and to stay out of drafts. Plant them in your summer garden. Bring them back indoors before the first frost and watch them bloom again the following year. (KEEP OUT OF REACH OF YOUNG CHILDREN. THE LEAVES ARE POISONOUS, IF EATEN.)
- **Mistletoe** symbolizes good will and friendliness in homes. Some Native Americans used mistletoe to cure toothaches! Mistletoe is a parasite and grows on host trees in the South, Southwest, and the Rocky Mountains. Hang a sprig in your classroom. Have children discuss ways in which they can show affection and friendship to those they care for. Compare and contrast the leaves and berries of mistletoe and holly.
- **Christmas Cactus** is a native of Brazil! With proper advance care, your plant should bloom for the Christmas season (although many have chosen to bloom in November and January!) In the fall, keep your plant in a cool place (50-55°F). Ideally, for mid-December blossoms, the cactus should have some sunlight and fourteen hours in darkness. Whenever your plant chooses to bloom, your class will have unusually shaped, beautiful blossoms to observe, discuss, and draw.
- **Paperwhite Narcissus** give you an early spring! Children can help plant the bulbs and watch them sprout. Graph the daily progress (height of leaves) and the length of time from the appearance of leaves, buds, and blossoms. Have children make their own paperwhites from tissue paper.
- **White Pine** is a resilient green bough which makes a lovely garland when tied together end-to-end. Children can create impressionistic spatter paint pictures with pine bough "brushes" using white paint on black construction paper.
- **Norfolk Island Pine** is a lovely tree to have in your classroom. The larger the plant, the easier it is to decorate with holiday or seasonal decorations (ornaments, heart, pumpkins, Easter eggs, shamrocks, tulips).

Visit your local greenhouse with children often during the holiday season but you'll find plant decorations throughout the year.

TODDLER TIME

SENSING THE HOLIDAYS

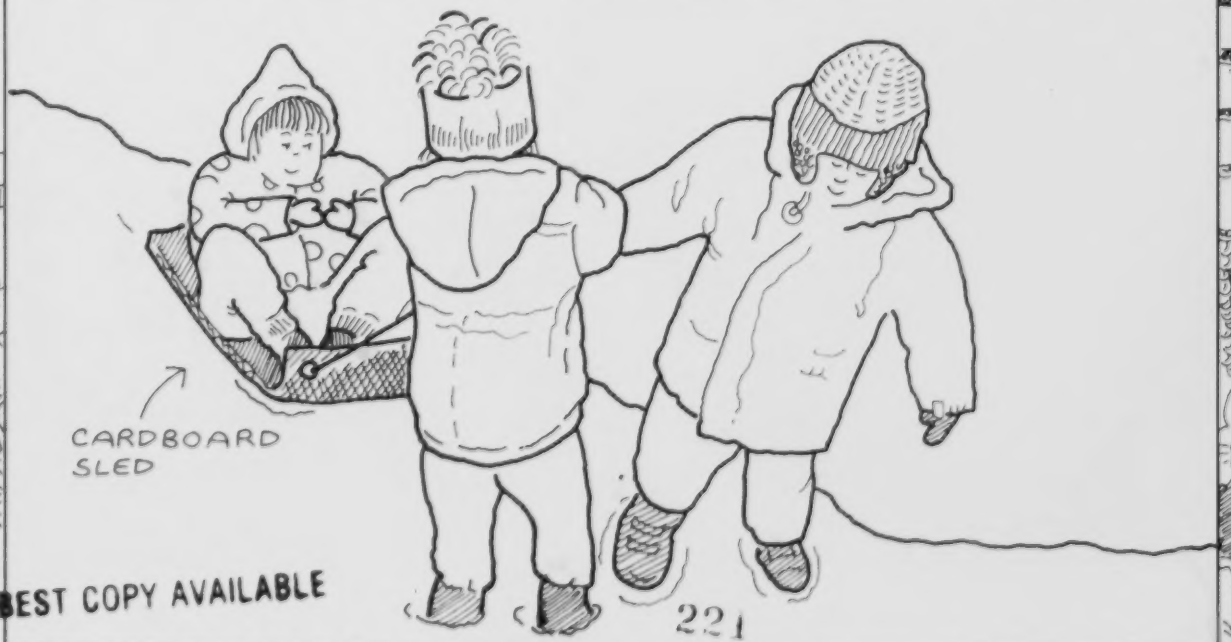
To a toddler, the world is a simple place. Everything centers around a child's own limited life experiences—what they've tasted, smelled, touched, heard, and seen. Most young children cannot even remember a previous holiday such as a birthday or Christmas. No wonder that holidays are such exciting times; even more so for toddlers to whom everything's new and full of mystery and surprises. Let's make plans for the holidays with activities that enhance sensory learning styles.

TOUCH

Let children make a texture collage as a holiday gift. A collage is a great way to help toddlers learn about textures. Have ready a box of fabric pieces cut into strips, circles, squares, and triangles. Help children select and glue the pieces on stout cardboard or a piece of mat board. Children love to run their hands over the different textures. Encourage children to expand their vocabulary and find words that describe what they feel with their hands.

Make a snowman inside. Put a pile of snow in the water table. Give children mittens and help them make a miniature snowman. Ask, *"When will the snowman melt?"* Because toddlers have a very vague sense of time, use daily happenings as reference points. *"Will our snowman melt before naptime? After naptime?"*

Take children outside on a new cardboard sled. Flatten a large cardboard box. This is your sled. Punch two holes on one end of the box, and string a rope through. It works best to have only one child at a time on the sled.



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SMELL

Holiday smells create memories. Some smells bring back long ago holidays—the pungent odors of ginger and cinnamon, the smell of a fresh cut pine tree, the cold crisp smells outside that tweak the nose when snow is on the way. Put an old crock pot (placed is a safe place that is not accessible to children) in your room. In it, simmer what you have on hand, usually orange and apple peels, cinnamon or cinnamon sticks, and a few cloves. The good smell soon permeates the room.

Pass small containers of herbs around at circle time. Use film cans with holes poked in the lids and filled with spices for sniffing games. Ask children which smells they like the best. Sprinkle whole cloves, stick cinnamon, or vanilla beans on a paper plate. Let children look, touch, and smell the spices.

SOUND

Change your music for the season. Play classical tapes that are new to children. *The Nutcracker* is great for this time of year. You can also play Christmas carols or tapes of nature sounds.

Follow directions in a game. Pass a bell around the circle while playing a taped song. Stop the music at intervals and ask the child holding the bell to follow your directions. *"Ring the bell two times." "Hold the bell behind you." "Put the bell on top of your head."* Try some two-step directions: *"Walk to the window and ring the bell three times."* Or, hang a bell from the ceiling in an open area in you room and ask children to take turns trying to ring it with the help of a beanbag.

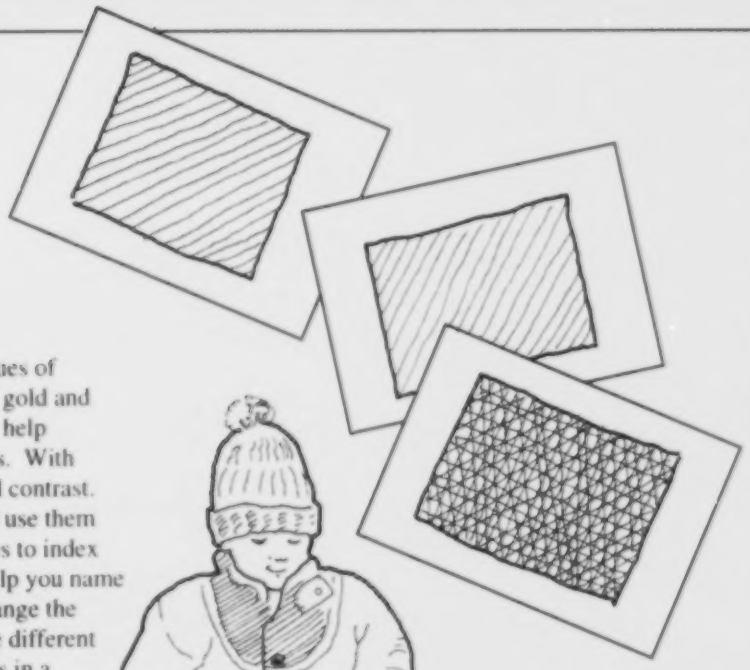
Compose your own music. Make up your own songs for the season, and be sure to involve children in the process. Use a familiar tune, and sing/chant new words that describe what you are doing, what you see, or tell a story about the music. The following chant is a good start for the first snowfall of the season, which is always an exciting time.

White Snow (Tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")
(Go to the window and look outside, then sing together:)

White snow, white snow (Fingers imitate falling snow)
Falling on me (pretend to look at sleeve to see snowflakes).
White snow, white snow (Fingers imitate falling snow)
As far as I see. (Pretend to walk through deep snow).
Cold snow, cold snow (Stand and shiver)
On me and on you. (Point to self and then to a friend.)

Read Jack Ezra Keat's *The Snowy Day* (Viking) or *The Snowman* by Raymond Briggs (Random House). Talk about what it feels like to get snow in your boots, or have frozen mittens or a red nose. *"What happens if you make a snowball and put it in your pocket?"* Enhance your toddlers' expanding vocabulary. Work with children to make a list of winter and holiday words. Use this as an ongoing activity adding a few words each group time. Small children love to learn new words.

SIGHT



Think of the glowing reds, greens, and blues of Christmas and Hanukkah and the sparkle of gold and silver in decorations. Plan color games that help children identify and begin to classify colors. With practice, they will also learn to compare and contrast. Ask a paint store for paint sample cards and use them for games and art projects. Glue the samples to index cards, laminate them, and ask children to help you name all of the colors. Then work together to arrange the cards from light to dark, using cards that are different shades of the same color. Also use the cards in a "Name that Color" games.

Walks are exercises in observation. Go for a walk and make an experience chart when you return. List everything that everyone has seen. That list should get longer and longer each time you take a walk. If taking walks has already been a regular part of your daily program, begin helping your children learn to compare and contrast. *"What do you see that is the same as yesterday?" "Do you see anything that looks different from when we took walks in the fall?"* (Open-ended questions like these can also exercise the memory and expand vocabulary.) Perhaps the traffic lights, the buildings, the cars, and trucks are basically the same. Help children notice that the trees look different, that gardens are bare, and people are dressed differently in the winter. You can expand this activity to include other senses. *"Are the smells the same (smoke or crispness in the air) or different (smells of food from restaurants)?" "Can you smell blooming flowers?"* Touch trees, fences and other objects. *"Does the big stone feel warm or cold?" "What sounds are different?"*

Use rubber winter stamps to practice making simple patterns. This activity is best done with adult help. Set out long narrow sheets of paper, ink pads, and winter designs on stamps. Help children stamp simple alternating patterns on the strips and on colored paper. Use the strips as borders for bulletin boards. Chant as you stamp: *"Red, blue, red, blue, red, blue."* Or *"Tree, candle, tree, candle..."* If this becomes too simple, try a sequence of three colors for designs.

TODDLER TIME

TASTE

Let children help you make many snacks. Be sure to also offer a variety of bite-sized fruits and veggies that balances the increased quantities of cookies and sweets children tend to consume during the holiday season.

The following recipe is a mild gingerbread cookie dough. Toddlers love to help mix it (You might pre-measure the ingredients). Remind them that washing hands with soap and water is always the first step in cooking. After making the dough, refrigerate it for a few hours (or chill overnight and make the cookies the next day).

Toddler cooking sessions should be touchy/feelie activities. Look at all the ingredients. Smell them and touch them. Watch the colors and textures mix and blend as we stir the dough. Gingerbread Men are difficult for small hands to handle. Instead of rolling out the dough and using cookie cutters, form the gingerbread dough into snakes, then one at a time (with lots of sideline help), each child make the roll into some kind of figure on the cookie sheet. Divide each snake into two parts: a long and short roll. The long snake is folded over, the top loop is the head, and both ends form legs and feet. Then add the shorter snake for the arms.

Children can make the figures walk or run by arranging their legs appropriately. While forming gingerbread figures, you can also play a "body parts" game. *"How many legs do you have?" "How many arms?"*

Ginger Cookie Men

What You'll Need: 3 cups unbleached flour ◆ 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda ◆1/2 teaspoon salt ◆ 2/3 cup light brown sugar ◆ 1 cup or 2 sticks margarine (not low fat or fat free) or butter ◆ 2/3 cup light molasses ◆ 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon ◆ 1 1/2 teaspoons ground ginger ◆ 3/4 teaspoon ground cloves ◆ 1 egg

What to Do:

1. Stir together the flour, baking soda, and salt in a bowl.
2. Beat margarine, brown sugar, molasses, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and egg in a big bowl until fluffy. (Each child stirs five times while counting, *"One, two, three, four, five"* and then passes the bowl to the next child.)

3. Stir in the dry ingredients. Test the dough. If it stills feels sticky, add a few tablespoons of flour until you have a soft, but not sticky dough , and chill dough at least one hour or overnight. (You can make the dough one day and shape and bake it the next).
4. Give each child a cookie-sized ball of chilled dough on a floured surface, and show him how to roll it into a snake. Take turns shaping the snake into a gingerbread man (or whatever else is desired) on a baking sheet coated with nonstick cooking spray.
5. Bake in a 350° F oven until slightly brown or about 10 minutes. Cookies can be eaten as is, or frosted with vanilla frosting and decorated with sprinkles or candies. Let each child make one cookie to eat and one to take home in a plastic sack.

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SCENTS-IBLE GIFTS

by Susan Root

Giving gifts is part of the tradition of many winter holidays. Making gifts for friends or family members might be a new idea for many young children. The emphasis for the child should be on the process of making the gift. The process can include many sensory experiences as children look, touch, and smell the ingredients. They hear new vocabulary words as adults explain, discuss, and describe the new textures and smells. Even though the end product is a gift for a special someone, the learning that occurs in the process of making the gift helps children to continue to grow in new directions.

These simple gift ideas are ones that will have everyone's noses twitching with interest. They can be successfully made by even very young children.

However, you know your children best. These gifts are all inedible. Be aware of children who may be tempted to taste the ingredients. Also, pine needles and perfume may pose a problem for children with allergies. Consider these factors as you plan your activities. You are the best judge of what your children can handle.

SCENTED BAGS

In advance, pre-cut five-by five-inch squares of colorful material. Talk a walk outdoors and collect handfuls of pine needles. Children can place the pine needles on the wrong side of the fabric and may choose to add a few cloves or a sprinkle of cinnamon. Help children gather up the fabric and place a rubber band to keep it secure. Add colorful ribbon or yarn.

ORANGE BALL

Give each child an orange and let her poke holes around it with a blunt needlework needle. Children can push cloves into the holes all around the orange. Wrap in cheesecloth and tie with a ribbon or just secure a ribbon around the orange. These balls provide a wonderful scent for a few weeks.

CINNAMON-APPLE SHAPES

You'll Need: 4 oz. can cinnamon ◆ 1 Tbsp. ground cloves ◆ 1 Tbsp. nutmeg ◆ 3/4 cup applesauce ◆ 2 Tbsp. white glue

What to Do:

1. Work all ingredients with spoon or hands until mixed.

2. Roll or pat 1/4 inch thick.

3. Use small cookie cutters to cut out shapes. Poke a hole with a small straw if you want to attach a string for hanging.

4. Lay shapes on a screen to dry for 1-2 weeks. (Additional cinnamon can be substituted for cloves and nutmeg if desired.)

BATH BEADS

You'll Need: Epsom salts ◆ food coloring ◆ perfume

What to Do:

1. In small plastic containers, let children mix 1/4 to 1/2 cup Epsom salts and a few drops of food coloring.

2. Add a few drops of perfume and stir.

3. Pour into baby food jars, label, and let child tie a fabric scrap and ribbon over the lid.

SOAP SHAPES

You'll Need: Ivory Soap flakes ◆ food coloring ◆ water

What to Do:

1. Begin with four cups Ivory Soap flakes and add water and food coloring until thick like play dough.

2. Children can pat soap until 1/4-1/2 inch thick and cut with small cutters.

3. Place on waxed paper or foam trays until dried — several days to a week.

4. Children can package several small soaps in small zip-locking bags. Fun for all ages in the tub!

These "scents"-ible gifts will allow you to provide children with new sensory experiences while they enjoy the fun and excitement of making a gift. The ideas can be adapted for holidays throughout the year.

THE MAGIC OF GIVING

by Karen Stephens

Two years ago, our classroom's five-year-old Tim, one of many true believers, waited his turn to ask Santa for items from his wish list. When it was finally Tim's turn, Santa hoisted Tim onto his lap, balanced him on his red-velveted knee, and leaned over to hear the predictable litany of *"I wants."* But you know what, Tim's list made Santa cry. Can you imagine the back luck of it? But it's true. Santa got a case of watery eyes as his cheeks bloomed crimson.

What undid Santa? Nothing much really. Santa was just caught off guard. You see, when Santa asked Tim what he wanted for Christmas, Tim didn't miss a beat. He looked Santa square in the eye and said, *"Well, I'd like to give you a present this year. What would YOU like?"*

Most children take pride in helping others; they beam when allowed to make a contribution. And adults don't have a monopoly on compassion. When children are well loved and nurtured with respectful guidance, the by-product is youth capable of compassion and consideration for the needs and feelings of others.

So this year, as your children recite personal wish lists, take time to make another list. Help your children think of things they can do for others. Help them think of gifts they can make for others. It will help them learn to shower happiness on others. Following are ideas to help children enjoy the magic of giving.

- As a class, think up ways to give to people who help your classroom all year long. What can you do for the secretary, custodian, milk or mail carrier, bus driver, etc.? Gifts can be anything from paintings from the Art Center, to flowers, to baked goods such as banana bread. Include children in presenting the gift to the "classroom helper."
- Ask children to create wish lists for OTHER people. Have them dictate a list of wishes they think their sibling or cousin would make.
- Ask for children's input on gift-giving ideas. What do they think Gram or Gramp needs or wants? What would make their life easier or more pleasant? Record their suggestions and give the lists to parents for follow up.
- Have children make small gifts at school for family members. Include children in wrapping gifts. (See page 28 for gift wrap ideas.) Talk about how much the recipient will appreciate the gift.
- Be a good role model. Let children see you engage in activities that enhance holiday joy for others. This may include talking about your own volunteer activities, such as the time you take making crafts for a bazaar or the time you take creating holiday displays for others to appreciate.
- Draw attention to the basic needs of others, including those in the natural world. Encourage children to give "gifts of food" to birds or other wildlife so the winter is more bearable for them.

- Help children think of services they could provide as a gift. Can they help the custodian sweep walks or shovel snow from the classroom's entrance walkway?

FOR DAD ☆ THIS COUPON IS GOOD FOR ONE SUPER CLEANING OF YOUR CAR ♡♡♡
FROM KYLE
TO MOMMY ♡
IS GIFT COUPON
OOD FOR ONE
TTING THE T
From Megan
TO MY GRANDMA ♥
THIS GIFT COUPON IS GOOD FOR ONE DAY OF LEAF RAKING.
From Julian

Coordinate children's and family's efforts to provide clothing for those less fortunate. Ask children and parents to scour their closets for too-small coats they can donate. As a class field trip, deliver the donation to your local Goodwill or shelter.

Coordinate children's donations to food pantries by asking families for canned or boxed foods that are nonperishable. Ask representatives of the food pantry to pick up the food and thank the class personally for their generosity.

Help children give the gift of song. As a class, go caroling. Where? You might go around your own block or to a local day care, hospital, or nursing home. You can even carol in other classrooms in your own child care center. Have children tape record or video tape holiday schools. These can be sent home to parents as gifts or even sent to children's family members who live far away.

Let children make toys for their pets. Children often find it easy to feel compassion for animals. Both dogs and cats like stuffed socks as chew or clawing toys. What could be easier than a stuffed sock for children to make for their very own Bowzer or Whiskers? If you have a class pet, such as a hamster, make holiday gifts for it, too!

Help cash-poor children give "coupons" as gifts to family members and friends. Coupon ideas: a bear hug, setting the table, a song, leaf raking, snow shoveling, pet walks, feeding, and grooming; errand running, sorting laundry and folding dry socks or face cloths, watering plants, meal preparation such as cleaning carrots, and household dusting are great gifts for family, friends, and neighbors.

As a class, pick a favorite cause to support. Causes can be local such as your community's Humane Society, or national such as Save the Whales or Greenpeace. Gifts may be monetary or material donations. Some classes collect recyclables and use the money earned for donations. It doesn't matter whether your class donates to a park, nursing home, children's museum, library, school, day care center, zoo, Scout troop, or the Red Cross. The act of giving is what matters. The habit of thinking of others will help children develop a sense of purpose and attachment to others.

I'm sure you will think of many other projects that will help children experience the magic of giving. Whatever your contribution, children will learn that as individuals, classmates, and families, together we can make the world a better place for everyone. And they'll learn a generous heart will take them a long way in life!

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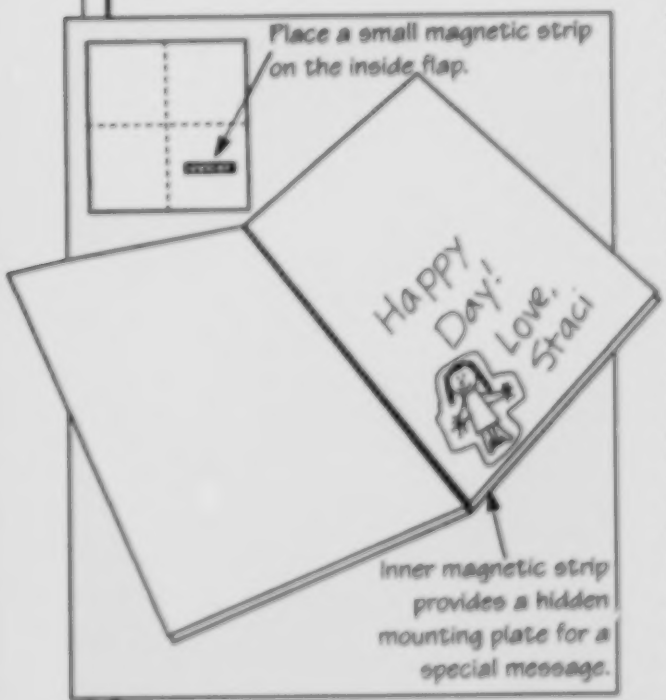
MAGNET MAGIC

by Sherry Burrell

To a young child, magnets are magic. One minute, they seem to jump toward one another, and the next minute, they seem to push away from one another. They mysteriously stick without glue, then suddenly they glide freely across the surface they seemed to be stuck to just moments before. Magnets can be placed down easily and removed with no effort; they seem to come in all sizes, shapes, colors, and designs. When they are hidden inside a card or tucked between two pieces of paper, they have the potential to create an amazing magical surprise.

Children love playing with magnets and most classrooms are well stocked with magnetic items. We have magnetic boards and magnetic storyboard figures, magnetic tiles, geometric shapes, and even magnetic tape. We offer science experiences in which children sort objects according to whether or not they are attracted to the magnets. Yet it's not too often that it occurs to us to take the concept of magnetism and turn it into an art form. When children create magnetic holiday cards, mazes, and pictures, they will enjoy both the process and the product. Try some of the ideas in this article, and add some of your own. While magnets are educational to use in the Science Center, they can become an even more valuable classroom tool when they are moved to the Art Area!


Place a small magnetic strip on the inside flap.
Happy Day! Love, Staci
Inner magnetic strip provides a hidden mounting plate for a special message.

HOLIDAY CARDS

There are countless "holidays" when children want to make some sort of a "celebration" card for a loved one. Most young children don't even need the excuse of a recognized holiday to dive into the making of a card in celebration of their love for friends and family members. Capitalize on this wonderful giving spirit and turn it into science project at the same time. Provide small pieces of magnetic tape or small stick-on magnets, and invite children to explore the placement of the magnets in several different locations in a sample store-bought card. Because a store-bought card is folded in fours before being folded in half, it provides an inside flap where a flat magnetic strip could be placed. That inner magnetic strip provides the hidden mounting plate for a pop-out part of the card or for a special message or picture the child wants to place in the card. Once children see how the system might work, encourage them to create their own cards from scratch. Provide lots of sayings that might go inside the card, and watch imaginations flow as children come up with lots of ideas for how to make their magnetic cards come to life.

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MAZES

Create a maze on a flat piece of oaktag. Place a tiny figure (car or animal shape) with a tiny magnet on the bottom of it on the maze. Let a child hold another magnet underneath the paper. The child will be able to move the figure through the maze without even touching the figure! To children, this seems like magic! But once they begin to see how it works, they become very excited about making a magnetic maze of their own. This is a great project because it combines math skills (measuring, laying out the maze design, and choosing shapes for the figures), art activities (coloring the maze design, making the figures out of play dough, pipe cleaners, or paper), motor skills (It takes eye-hand coordination to move the magnet from underneath the paper.), and science concepts (magnetism).

Since it is necessary to manipulate the figure from underneath the paper, it helps to mount the maze by sliding it into a slot cut in a cardboard box that has one side completely removed. Then the maze is held up and the child can easily slide a hand under it to move the magnetic wand against the bottom of the paper maze.

REFRIGERATOR PICTURES

What parent doesn't have children's artwork posted on the refrigerator door? To capitalize on this common occurrence, simply invite children to add magnetic strips to the backs of their favorite artwork. Children can also make a special magnetic frame that can be used to slip new artwork into each week. The magnetic frame might be made from cardboard, balsa wood, meat packing trays (clean and unused), or decorated plastic frames. Mount the frame on a backing so that one end is open and will allow a piece of art to slide into the frame. Provide materials so that children can personalize the frames with their own decorations, and add some fairly strong magnets to the back four corners. Parents will appreciate this gift since it encourages children to choose just one piece of art to show off each day or week. The refrigerator door is neatly organized, and the artwork is displayed with style!

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WRAP IT UP!

by Karen Stephens

Children develop creativity, problem solving, and resourcefulness by wrapping their holiday gifts. When you use recyclables to create wrapping paper, you encourage conservation, frugality, and appreciation for everyday materials. Try some of the ideas below.

Birdseed Bag Wrap Sunflower and thistle bird seed purchased in bags are often decorated with colorful birds. They are so festive looking you don't even have to add adornment. Cut only the outside layer of the bags for wrapping. (The inner layer will have oil spots from the sunflower seed.)

Cartoon Wrap Sunday newspaper comics can be used as colorful wrapping paper.

Catalog Wrap Colorful pages from toy catalogs or toy sale flyers can be used to wrap small gifts.

Collage Wrap Wrap packages in brown or white butcher paper. After wrapping, let children glue on sewing accessories for a collage effect. Items for gluing might include: sequins, shiny or colorful buttons, rickrack strips, wiggly eyes, ribbon, and so on.

Watercolor and Paper Towel Wrap Wrap packages in two layers of white paper towels. Let children use watercolors to add decoration. Before actually painting the packages, let children practice using watercolors on paper towels. Once they get the hang of using just a little water, packages can be decorated without becoming waterlogged. To apply paint, children can use small brushes, Q-tips, cotton balls, or eye droppers.

Fabric and Lace Wrap Provide old fabric scraps for gift wrapping. (Plaids and small prints are prettiest.) For a fancy effect, cover fabric with a layer of old lace. Top it off with a yarn bow.

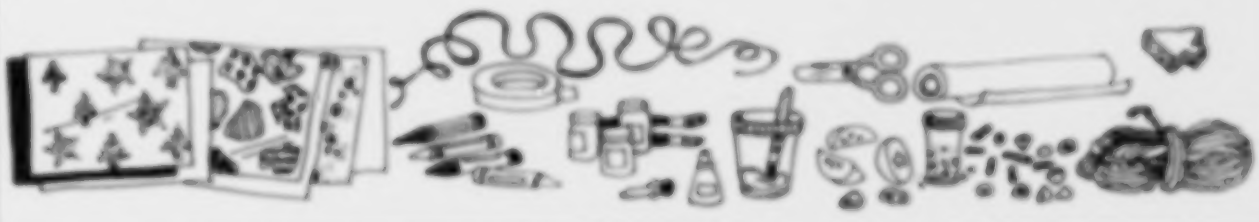
Fabric Collage Wrap Wrap a package in a solid color of paper. Provide many one to two-inch fabric scraps and a glue stick. Let children glue fabric scraps onto the wrapped package in any design they choose.

Poster Wrap Recycle old, tatter-edged posters as wrapping paper. Posters of flowers, wildlife, kites, and hot air balloons are especially colorful.

Sponge Print Wrap With children, cut out holiday shapes from sponges (or buy them precut). With tempera paint, let children make sponge prints on the large sheets of paper. Once the paper dries, it can be used for wrapping.

Dried Flower Wrap With children, wrap a package with plain paper. Provide glue (or a glue stick) so children can glue on natural items for gift decoration. Suggestions: dry pressed flowers, dry flower petals, and plant leaves, such as fern fronds.

Nature Treasure Wrap Instead of bows, let children top off packages with natural items they've collected through the year. Items such as feathers, maple tree seeds (helicopters), or evergreen pine needles can be applied with a glue stick. An adult with a glue-gun will need to attach heavier items, such as pine cones, acorns, or seashells.



Grocery Bag Scribble Wrap Cut off the bottom of a paper grocery bag. Cut down one side. Open the bag to lay flat with the inside facing up. Let your children scribble all over the bag with crayons or a washable markers. When finished, use the scribble bag for wrapping.

Sticker Wrap Wrap packages with a solid color of paper. Let children apply stickers to their heart's delight!

Pine-Bough Painted Wrap Provide children with a solid color of paper. Provide holiday colors of tempera paint and a small pine bough for each color. Pour a thin layer of paint into rectangular cake pans, one for each color. Let children dip boughs into cake pans and then "paint" the wrapping paper with the pine bough. This creates a very airy, brushed effect on the wrapping paper. Once the paper is dry, use it to wrap presents.

Shoe Box Wrap Provide children with a plain brown or white shoe box. (Cover the lid with plain paper so the brand logo doesn't show.) Let them decorate the box top and sides with crayons, Craypas, markers, or stickers. Small items, such as buttons or sequins, also can be glued onto the shoe boxes.

Cookie-Cutter Wrap Line a cookie sheet with two layers of paper towels. Slightly dampen the towels with water. Brush on a thin layer of tempera paint (one cookie sheet per paint color). Provide holiday-shaped cookie cutters, such as trees, hearts, stars, mittens, etc.

Give children a large piece of white, brown or other solid colored paper. Let children press cookie cutters into the paint tray and then onto their gift wrap paper.

Yarn Wrap Wrap a package in plain or a solid colored paper. Provide a glue stick and many colors and lengths of yarn. Let children glue yarn onto the wrapped package to create ropes of color. Let them create any design they choose.

Bucket Wrap Empty, clean gallon-sized plastic buckets of ice cream (or other products that come in plastic buckets) can be used as a gift wrap. Make sure they are clean, then let children color them with permanent marker or apply holiday stickers. The lids to the buckets (which often have brand-name labels) can be covered with construction or contact paper. The handles on buckets make gift carrying easier!

Shopping Bag Wrap Provide a large, solid-colored paper shopping bag with handles. Provide construction paper and glue stick so children can cover the store logo. Let children decorate the bag with washable markers. Children can also glue small items onto the bags for a collage effect. Items could include fabric or construction papers scraps or stickers.

Pom-Pom Wrap Wrap a package in a solid color. Provide different sizes and colors of yarn pom-poms so children can glue them onto the top of the package for decoration.

Tissue Paper Collage Wrap Wrap a package in a solid color of paper. Provide many different colors and sizes of tissue paper squares and a glue stick. Let children decorate the wrapped package with the tissue squares. They can overlap tissue colors for a stained-glassed or kaleidoscope effect.

Aluminum Foil and Doily Wrap Wrap package in heavy-duty aluminum foil. Let children glue on colorful paper doilies.

Contact Paper Wrap Wrap a package in a solid color paper. Cut out shapes from contact paper. Let children peel the back off the contact paper shapes and then apply them to the package. (Older children can cut out their own contact paper shapes.) Try plaid, flowered, and paisley contact paper.

HAPPY HOLIDAY PARTIES

by Barbara F. Backer

Children love parties, especially parties at school. But for teachers, party season sometimes seems to last year round. For each holiday—Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, New Year, Valentine's Day, Purim, Easter, Passover, and more—schools encourage teachers to have a special event to commemorate the occasion.

Children's excitement mounts as each holiday draws near, and the party day can be almost a nightmare. You know what children need least is the stimulation of a party — another special event in a busy holiday season. Yet you also know that learning about holidays and the customs surrounding them helps children learn about their world and value others.

So what's a teacher to do? Just remember the "KIST" approach—Keep It Simple, Teacher—and chase the nightmares away. With some planning, you can stay pretty close to your normal day's routine and keep extra commotion to a minimum.

Plan to follow your usual daily schedule, fitting the party into a time slot where it will cause the least commotion. Circle Time is a natural time for a low-key celebration.

Think of the holiday related stories, games, songs, and finger plays your children have learned. Choose their favorites and include those as your Circle Time Activities. Read a class-made book, too. Include movement activities to help youngsters expend some of their physical energy. Let children help you make up action songs, such as the one below, that can be adapted for any holiday. Try these in your celebration.

HOLIDAY SONG

(Tune: "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush")

Today we celebrate
Chanukah
Chanukah, Chanukah
Today we celebrate
Chanukah
Chanukah is (almost) here.

Stamp two times and turn around.
Stamp two times and turn around.
Stamp two times and turn around.
Chanukah is (almost) here.

(Repeat the first verse.)

Jump two times and clap your hands.
Jump two times and clap your hands.
Jump two times and clap your hands.
Chanukah is (almost) here.

Help children lower their energy level as well as their noise level by playing a game that requires listening. Try a seated, circle game where children pass one or two items around the circle while you play quiet music. When the music stops, children holding the items do an action (jump three times, stomp their feet) and then the game begins again. Pass around items related to the holiday—a small pumpkin and a turkey figure for Thanksgiving, a dreidel and a mask for Purim.

Don't begin holiday activities too soon. Making holiday ornaments and learning holiday songs for three weeks just gives children more overstimulating days. A week of holiday preparations should be plenty for pre-schoolers.

Youngsters enjoy decorating the room, so provide plenty of materials for them to use, and hang up everything they offer. Have them make simple holiday hats or necklaces to be worn only at the party. Let them know that when they put these on the party begins, and when they take them off the party is over.

Decide whether party refreshments are going to be the children's meal or only a snack. If parents bring refreshments, be specific about what you want. Real fruit juice is preferable to sugared drinks. Fresh fruit and

vegetables with a simple dip is a better choice than cupcakes, cookies, and other sweets. Children are happy with healthy foods. They'll believe that anything served is special because it's a party.

If the refreshments will be the children's lunch, consider serving nutrition-dense sandwiches. Serve fruit and vegetable finger foods instead of potato chips or other fatty side dishes. Sandwiches take on a festive air when you pre-cut the bread with holiday-shaped cookie cutters. Serve children's favorites. Sliced cheese, tuna or chicken salad, egg salad, and peanut butter and jelly are usually popular.

Special plates and napkins add a party touch, but aren't necessary if budgets don't allow them. Children can decorate plain napkins and decorate the table with holiday items they've made from modeling dough.

If parents are included in the party, let them share the normal routine with their children. Invite parents to arrive just before Circle Time where they'll see their little ones put on their special "party" hats or necklaces to get the party going. They'll sing, move to music, do finger plays and listen to stories, just like they do every school day. The only difference is that today's selections are holiday-related. They'll be relaxed doing the "routine thing." You've helped them avoid the agony of memorizing lines and rehearsing for big productions. You've made sure the party will be age appropriate.

Invite parents to sit in the circle with their children and participate in the fun. Display posters of the words to the songs and finger plays for parents to follow.

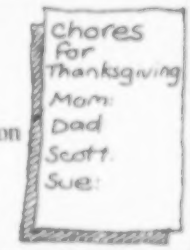
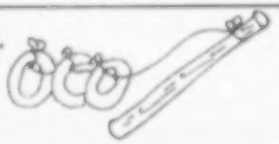
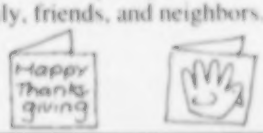
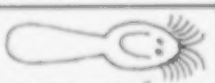
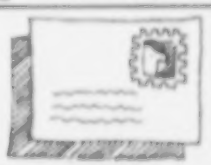
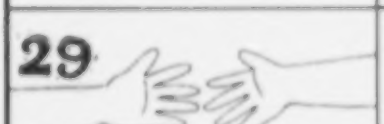
Some parents think children should exchange gifts at holiday parties. This practice often causes more tears than joy when some children see a friend receive a coveted gift and their own gift is not of interest. Also, some parents cannot afford to buy gifts. Suggest to parents that they send a gift for the classroom if they desire. Post a "wish list" of classroom supplies that often need replacing: crayons, plastic zip-locking bags, dress-up clothes, staples, miniature staplers, cotton balls, blank tapes, masking tape, flour and salt for modeling dough, etc. During the party, let children open the gifts they brought. Have wrapped extras on hand for children who didn't bring anything.

When the party ends, the indoors probably cannot contain children's excitement. Remember the great outdoors, and if the weather permits, let youngsters play outside.

Remember to take plenty of photos of the party and be certain each child is captured in a photo. You can use these later in language experience activities, and can send copies home with children.

A CALENDAR FOR THE FAMILY

NOVEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
1 Make a "We're thankful" chain out of fall colored construction paper 8-10 inches by 2-3 inches wide. Add the chain loops as each person thinks of something to write on the loop.	**2** Create a family chore chart of things each person wants to do to help out during the holidays. 	**3** Make and send invitations to those who are coming to the Thanksgiving feast. If you are going elsewhere, write a letter to the hostess and ask what you can bring. (Give thanks for the freedom to vote!)	**4** Get film and load the camera to take pictures of all the holiday preparations and activities for memories!
8 Make some treats or fruit baskets for friends or relatives in nursing homes or hospitals—pay them a visit or send a card.	**9**  Pretend to be Pilgrims and Native Americans. Play games they played such as a ring toss game using dried apples on a string.	**10** Play a game where you name all the things in a room or your house that weren't around when the Pilgrims came to America!	**11** *Veteran's Day*
15 Make Thanksgiving cards for family, friends, and neighbors. 	**16**  Make spoon puppets out of plastic or wooden spoons to represent holiday guests. Role-play conversation and manners. (Use them for name card-holders on Thanksgiving Day).	**17** Plan for after-dinner family games on the big day! Choose games like "I Spy," or "Spin the Bottle" and give "Thanks" for something.	**18** Give thanks for fall. Rake the leaves and clean up gardens to get them ready for winter.
22  Mail the cards you made and check to see if the turkey needs defrosting.	**23** Start fixing foods ahead that can be frozen; for example: pumpkin bread or corn muffins.	**24** Polish silver and clean and clear away all unnecessary clutter! Make room for the bird!	**25**
29  Adopt a family or person to help in December for the holidays.	**30** Create your own favorite leftover turkey recipe. Make a holiday family cookbook of favorite turkey recipes!		

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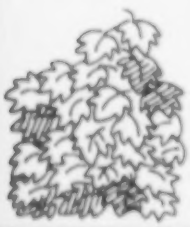
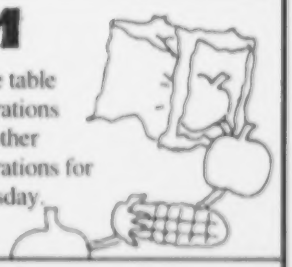
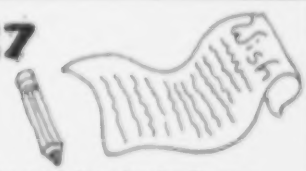
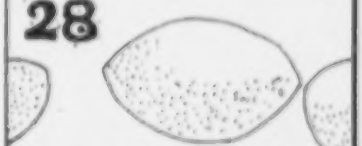
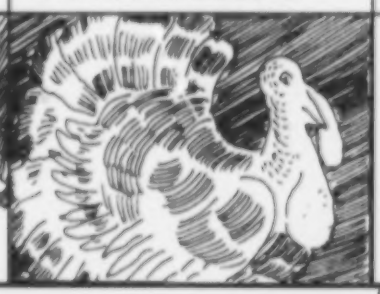
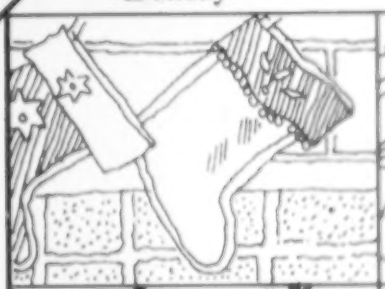
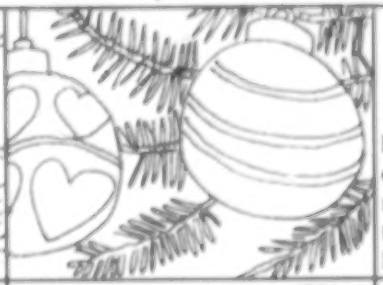
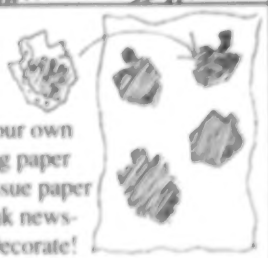
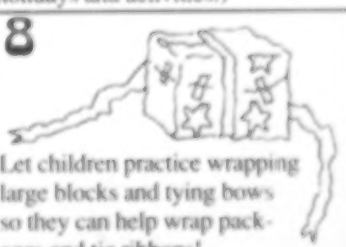
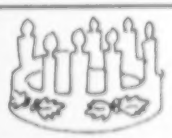
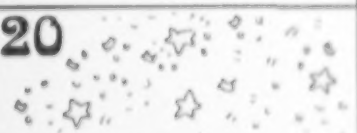
A CALENDAR FOR THE FAMILY

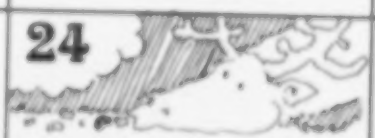
Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	5 Plan a healthy, balanced meal (even if it has larger amounts!) for the holiday feast using the Food Pyramid. Include each family member's ideas!	**6** Encourage everyone to show you're thankful for what you have. Clean your room!	**7** Give thanks for your neighborhood, go for a walk, and clean up any litter.
Give thanks to those who died for our country and who served our country in the armed services.	**12** Write a poem or create a song about your thankfulness! Use it for cards or a wall plaque.	**13** Collect pine cones and natural materials to make holiday crafts.	**14** Plan the schedule and duties for the Thanksgiving feast. Let your children know how they can help! (shopping, making lists, chopping foods, making decorations, setting the table)
	**19** Get a plain paper tablecloth. Let everyone make handprints with tempera paints. When dry, turn them into turkeys. Add Native American designs, fall flowers, and the names of Thanksgiving guests.	**20** Make a "family tree." Share all you know about the relatives with your children. Bring it out when grandparents are present to get their input. (See Dec. 25th idea).	**21** Make table decorations and other decorations for Thursday. 
Make pies and other foods for the feast that can be refrigerated. Set the table before going to bed.	**26** Have a *Happy Thanksgiving*! GIVE THANKS and LOVE!	**27**  Make wish lists for the December holidays. Be sure to include wishes you have for others, too!	**28**  Have a family game of touch football! Use a Nerf ball, of course!
			*"A Calendar for the Family" has been created by Gail P. Jones*

A CALENDAR FOR THE FAMILY

DECEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
		**1** Turn the November photos into a Memory Placemat by color copying them on an 11-by 17-inch piece of paper and having these laminated. Make extras for gifts to give family members. (Remember to start taking more photos for December holidays and activities.)	**2**
6 Make door decorations and wreaths with natural materials such as greens and pine cones. (Save the Sunday comics for wrapping some gifts for children.)	**7**  Make your own wrapping paper using tissue paper and blank newsprint. Decorate!	**8**  Let children practice wrapping large blocks and tying bows so they can help wrap packages and tie ribbons!	**9** Make more gifts for family members, friends, and shut-ins!
13  *St. Lucia Day* Let children serve their parents St. Lucia Day buns in bed, as is the tradition in Sweden on this day.	**14** *The first day of Hanukkah* Read the Jewish folk tale, "The Two Brothers." Make *latkas* (potato pancakes) with the whole family.	**15** Make candles using melted wax from crayons and old candles or colored paraffin. (Only ADULTS handle this.) Use muffin tins, adding wicks as the wax cools. Float these candles in a pretty bowl for your favorite holidays.	**16** *The first day of Los Posadas* During this nine-day Mexican holiday, neighbors go from house to house.
20  *Glitter Day* Decorate with glue and glitter. Add a little magic to decorations, cards, and gifts!	**21** *The first day of Winter* Make a snowman if you have snow! If not, write or read a "winter tale." Celebrate with a party!	**22** Keep taking pictures for your December Memory Placemat! Save some film for the rest of the special events this month!	**23**
27 Discuss the seven principles of Kwanzaa with your family. Ask how you can help achieve them in the family and at school.	**28** Make a New Year's resolutions' poster with the whole family's participation!	**29** Make laminated placemats like you did for the November holidays. Be sure to include names and dates.	**30** Make a family calendar with the picture part being photos of your family during each month in the past year.

A CALENDAR FOR THE FAMILY

Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Make a countdown paper chain or advent-type calendar leading to December holidays, the first of winter, and so on.	**3** Decide what cards you wish to make and create the list of addresses needed.	**4** Start making your cards and gifts for friends and family members. Plan what you're doing for the person or family you've "adopted."	**5** *St. Nicholas Day* Get books from the library about all of the December holidays.
	10 Bake some holiday cookies and freeze them to decorate later.	**11** Plan some quiet family games to use in the days ahead when waiting can sometimes become "whining." Make up small boxes of "things to do" for those moments when parents are busy!	**12** *Poinsettia Day* Make poinsettias for house decorations with red and green tissue paper. Make buns for breakfast tomorrow (St. Lucia Day).
Make a piñata with your child and stuff with small toys and candles.	**17** Deliver cards to your neighbors, going house to house!	**18** Help your child clean out the toy chest and closet! You may need room for new things!	**19** Make a bird feeder for our feathered friends. Be sure to keep it filled!
Give the gifts you've made or bought to your "adopted" family. Decorate some of the frozen cookies and take them too!	**24**  Make "reindeer food" with cereals, nuts, raisins, etc. and use it for "people snacks" too! Get to bed early if Santa is coming!	**25** *Merry Christmas!* Interview and tape-record family members, especially grandparents, on what holidays were like when they were young. Add their favorite recipes to your holiday recipe book. Take pictures!	**26** *Kwanzaa Begins!* Make placemats with African designs and celebrate with a bowl of fruit (symbolizing the first harvest).
	31 Make party hats, kazoos, and snacks for the New Year's Eve party.	*Happy New Year!*	*"A Calendar for the Family" has been created by Gail P. Jones*

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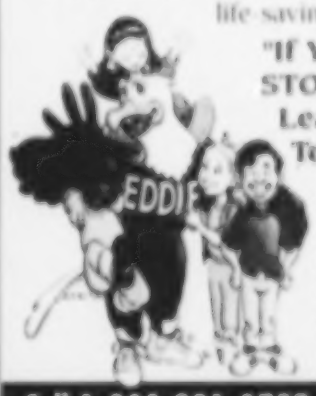

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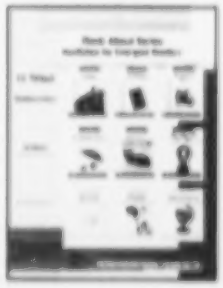

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